$1.50

THE SPACE GAMER

No. 17

THE SPACE GAMER

MAY—JUNE
1978

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THE SPACE GAMER is published six times a year by Metagaming 3100-A Industrial Terrace, Austin, Texas 78759. **SUBSCRIPTION** information, changes of address, orders, etc., to Metagaming, P.O. Box 15346, Austin, TX 78731.

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News items and product announcements subject to editorial whim. SUBSRIPTIONS: six issues, $8; twelve issues, $15. Base rate for unsolicited manuscripts is one cent per word; they must be typed, double spaced, and contain return postage. Base rate for art is $20 per average page size; interior art should be black ink on heavy white paper. Application to mail at second-class rates is pending at Austin, Texas.

THE LAST WORD

As the above title indicates, this column will be the last thing put into each issue of TSG. It will, hopefully, contain the most current info for you, the reader. As editor, I hope you will look forward to reading it, and that you will find it informative.

Let me begin by expressing my sincere apology to Mr. Tony Van Liew for the error in the spelling of his name from TSG No. 16. I am completely responsible for the mistake, and hope he will pardon my blunder. His review (INVASION: AMERICA), was very informative, and I hope most readers found it as enjoyable as I did. Again, I apologize for this error.

Current back issue info: Each week, many letters ask about back issues. The most recent TSGs are all available; 13, 14, 15, and 16. If you want any of these, I suggest you order soon. Many stores and individuals are grabbing them up like the proverbial 'hot cake'. Material for all issues has been selected for its ability to be useful for a long time. Although some content is dated, we think the greater part of each issue will help the average gamer for many years.

Upcoming issues of TSG will feature reviews of **PROFESSIONAL WRESTLING, SUPERHERO 44,** and **OBJECTIVE: MOSCOW,** some excellent fiction by Brian McCue, and more game variants. Remember, TSG needs articles. You are in the driver's seat, and if that clever idea you have stays with you, nobody can find out just how clever it is. Send those article submissions to me, the editor. I will respond as rapidly as possible on use. In the future, look to this column for writer's information.

For all those people in the Evansville, Indiana area, I suggest you make plans to attend the MicroGame tournament to be held there August 26. It looks like loads of fun. Check News & Plugs for complete information.

Any clubs who would like to be listed in News & Plugs should send all information to Robert Taylor in care of Metagaming, P.O. Box 15346, Austin, TX 78761. He is doing a fine job of compiling all the listings, but he needs you to send him legible, coherent data. He will be very happy to list you, so send us your club info.

Please send all your mail to our Post Office box. We have lost some very important material by having it addressed incorrectly. The new, higher rates that we have just knuckled under make it very important that everyone gets it right the first time.

'Til next issue, good gaming!

. . . C. Ben Ostrander

WHERE WE'RE GOING

CHANGING HORSES . . . . . .

There are two things you can do when you stick your neck out and come up short. You can keep on and make it worse, or cut your loss.

Around the first of the year Metagaming expected to be able to accomplish a number of things by the time Origins rolled around. Not that Origins is a crucial date, it is a convenient date to shoot for. We'd hoped to be able to introduce **THE FANTASY TRIP: IN THE LABYRINTH, STELLAR CONQUEST,** and **GODSFIRE** in a boxed format. We were well into planning to produce metal miniature figures. Frankly, it looked really great on paper.

But . . . . . .

By May first, the miniatures effort was totally dead, after tying up some useful money and wasting several hundred hours of work. By May 15, the cost estimate of doing the boxed games had crept up from a barely acceptable unit cost by 65%. When I look at those box estimates, mounted map estimates and full die-cut counter estimates, I wonder how Avalon Hill manages to ever make a profit. Metagaming can make TWO MicroGames for what a box alone costs, sheeesh.

So, we ain't gonna introduce boxed games and miniatures at this year's Origins. I feel like I often do in a game where my die rolls never, ever seem to come up. There is a possibility that **TFT: LABYRINTH** will be ready in another format by Origins. At this time I'd have to say the chances are against it. **TFT: LABYRINTH** will not come out until it is right. We view it as the next evolutionary step in fantasy role gaming and it isn't something that should be rushed. What Metagaming will do over the next year is make our MicroGames effort even more successful. We've found a market niche with a lot of potential.

TSG'S NEW FORMAT is doing very well. A number of retail outlets took more copies than usual and sold them out in short order. It looks as if our paid circulation target of 8,000+ by year end won't be a problem.

Telling you that TSG is doing well is the time to remind everyone that most of what we print is written by you, the reader. Keep those articles coming. One thing I've noticed is that the reader participation rate has gradually dropped. We get no more letters of comment and article submissions from 5,000 readers than we did from 800, two years ago. Why? TSG's amateur format of the past may have encouraged more reader participation than our new, slick look. Those who've read our pages for all that time can't help but noticing that the articles we run now are, on average, not much different than before. The layout, look and editing has gotten better.

TSG is always on the look out for new articles and ideas. TSG even pays a penny a word for general submissions. If you have something to say on SF&F gaming, why not write it up and send it in. If you find it interesting, the chances are many others will also. Just remember to submit material typed and double spaced. Game articles are preferred to fiction.

A number of you noted that we forgot to put the TSG subscriber price on the **DEATH TEST** ad in TSG No. 15. Regular price for **DEATH TEST** is $2.95, TSG subscriber price is $2.50. Some thought that this was the first sign that subscriber privileges were going to be curtailed. TSG subscribers will *always* get some special treatment.

BAD NEWS does come from the post office. The postal service is hitting us with huge new rate increases. Some third and fourth class rates will be up by 40% to 90%. These huge increases are going to cause some changes in the mail order side of gaming. Firms that are heavily dependent on mail order will have to cover the cost increase in some manner. The postage cost is one of the biggest mail order costs. When it rises by such unreal amounts, the cost structure of business is altered.

About 40% of our business is mail order. The new rates make this part of our business only marginally profitable. The cost of postage, envelopes, and handling are now more than the cost of the games. This even takes into account some recent inflation in printing cost. Two alternatives are being evaluated to meet the postage burden. One alternative, the hard one, is to drop our mail order business. The other alternative is to put a 50 cents postage and handling charge on each order. The 50 cent charge won't cover the increase in postage on large orders, but the handling charge on those orders is proportionally smaller. We tend to favor the 50 cents per mail order charge at this time.

One thing that will be done is to shift as much of our mail to UPS as possible. UPS rates will increase with the postal's increase, but not by as much. The other thing we can do is to agitate with our congressmen to delete the postal monopoly on all mail classes. The average postal employee with seven years service now makes almost $18,000 annually with their new pay increases. That's what we are paying for and they give bad, slow, inaccurate service.

Our readership is changing. The MicroGames are bringing a younger group of readers to THE SPACE GAMER The slick format will give us broader store distribution and bring in many who have been primarily store buyers. Advertising in science and science fiction publications has kept a steady stream of s-f oriented readers coming. There is less distinction between gamer's and science fiction fans in gaming than there has been in the past. Our mail shows progressively more acceptance of gaming by s-f fans, particulary the younger fans. Gamers also show more willingness to have TSG run material that would appeal mostly to s-f fans. There is a rise of science fiction gaming as an identifiable sub-culture.

THE SPACE GAMER seems to be playing a leading role in the development of s-f gaming. Consistent attempts to blend a variety of material in our pages is working. TSG still need better and more varied articles to accomplish our goal. TSG wants to be the voice and source publication for science fiction gaming. By appealing to a variety of interests and improving quality we'll make it. From the letters we get it appears we are most of the way there already.

Despite some delays caused by trying to get miniatures and boxed games out, the computer related projects are still coming. We will be able to offer MicroGame subscriptions before the end of the year. There will be a computer game up and running before the end of the year. My chaotic accounting and record keeping system will be in order by the end of the year. The computer projects will be done even if it means delays to some game projects. The computer is the keystone of future growth. It needs to come now.

... Howard Thompson

Avalon didn't want to fight.
But that didn't mean it
couldn't. As the Terran
Empire found out — the
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to invade...
They had underestimated **THE YTHRI**

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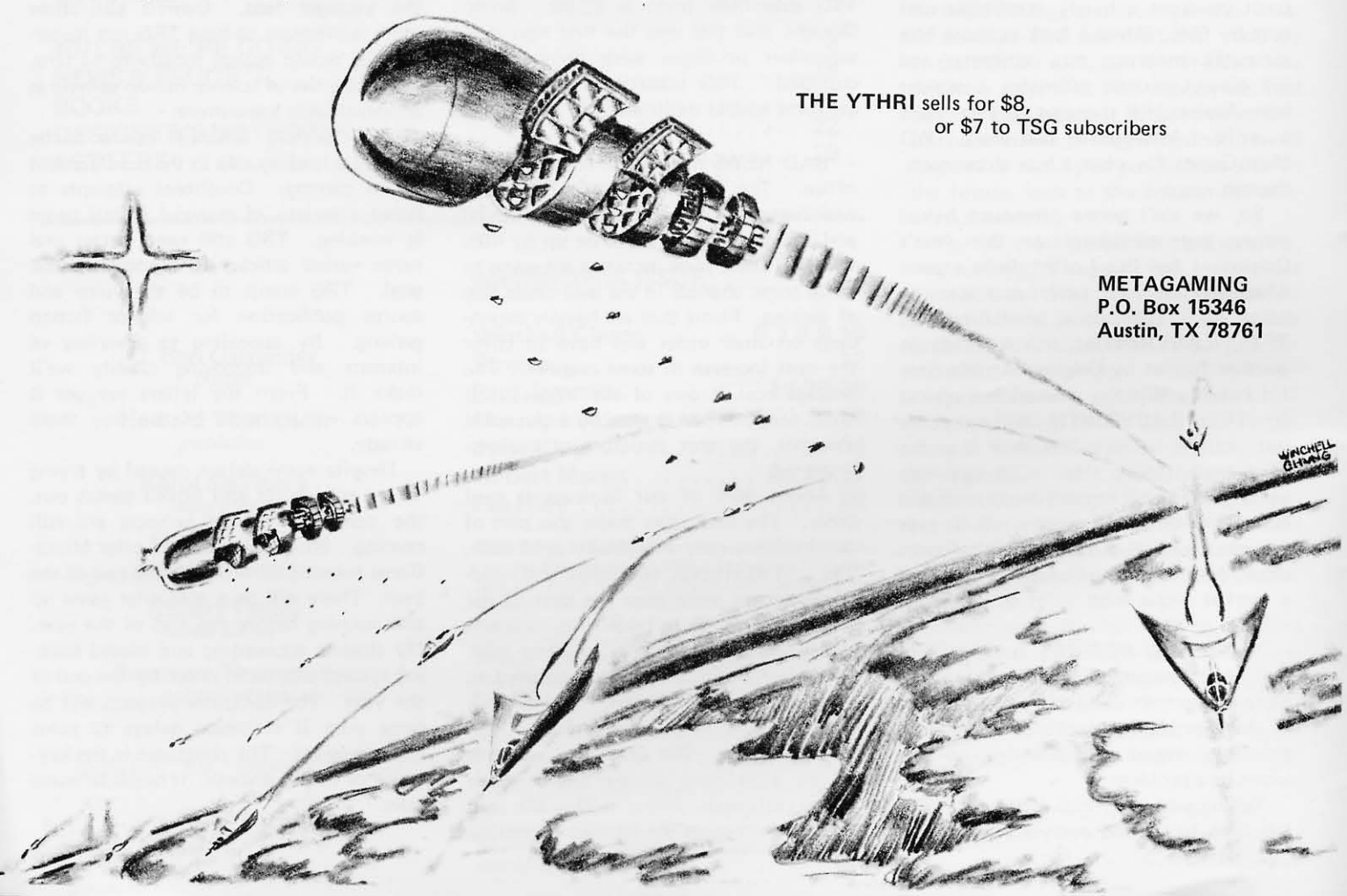


G.E.V.

a designer's introduction

by

Steve Jackson

The hovercraft jumped and bucked as it made the transition from river surface to shore. Then it was off, speeding across the grassland at better than a hundred kilometers per hour. To the west was river and dark forest; to the east, the sun was just coming up, dim and red in an unnaturally dusty sky. To the north, closer every minute, was the target area: depots, communication centers, bridges--still dreaming in the red morning.

Asleep, yet waking fast. To the north, alarms buzzed, orders were given, machines growled to life. In a buried command center, an officer cursed and ordered a call for reinforcements.

* * *

G.E.V. is the sequel to **OGRE**. In a way, it's a game of **OGRE**, *without* the Ogres. . . . a straight infantry/armor game, set in the future. In terms of complexity, it's a step up. The map is bigger; more counters are involved on each side; movement is considerably more complicated. But anyone who's played **OGRE** will recognize the game.

I've wanted to do a game like this ever since **OGRE** came out. I enjoy **OGRE**--but it only covers one type of situation. The idea of interactions between the "little stuff" fascinated me: are GEVs good against anything except an Ogre? Are infantry good for anything at *all* except sacrifices? What's the best defensive "line" you can put together with **OGRE** units?

Working out the answers was fun--and, in the process, a new game was designed. As I'd hoped, the addition of terrain effects and detailed overrun rules made a big difference. **G.E.V.** allows both players a wide choice of tactics--and the system is flexible enough to fit all kinds of scenarios. One thing didn't change, though. **G.E.V.**, like **OGRE**, has a role-playing element. As the attacker, you get to smash, pillage, and burn--but you have to conserve your force. As the defender, you're trying to hold the line with a grossly inadequate force . . . but the reinforcements are on their way . . .

* * *

Even inside the howitzer's cabin, the sound was deafening. Outside? It didn't bear thinking about. Captain Vanetti returned his attention to the screens. He had ten attacking units to deal with--five of which were concentrated on his own position--and that was just too many. Sword One was not only a worthwhile target in its own right; it was the keystone of the line the attacking units were trying to breach. Vanetti reflected that he really ought to be frightened.

The gun's thunder let up momentarily. In the sudden silence, Vanetti's gunner grinned. "Two down--ten to go!

"Make that nine," replied Vanetti. Unless his screen lied, one of the attacking hovercraft had just gone to a fiery death--and the nuclear shells that killed it could only have come from one place. "You got another one!"

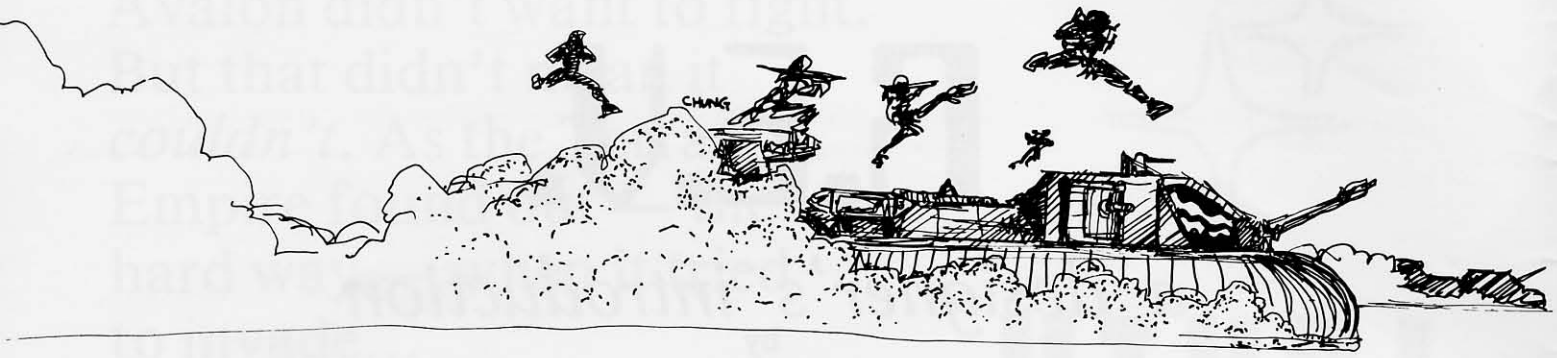
But, the Combine units were reforming and coming in. "Sword One to Shield One. Pull in a bit; they're coming back." Because the infantry screen was three kilometers in front of his howitzer, he was still here--but, it was time to draw them in. The terrain here was better for GEVs than infantry; the patches of woods were small and far apart. But his men were holding--so far.

"Shield One to Sword One. Pullback accomplished." Good. The infantry couldn't chase hovercraft--but they could wait under the umbrella of howitzer fire, making a rush impossible. The GEVs could hit them--but only by coming within howitzer range. Twice they'd probed at his position and at Sword Two to the west. They'd killed some infantrymen . . . but their own losses had been higher.

Then, the thunder began again, and more shells sought the foe. Vanetti's eyes went back to the screen. He had eight squads left, ranged in a semicircle around his own position. Sword Two had only six--but Sword Two was a mobile unit. Its range was less, but it could move toward--or away from--the action. Vanetti and Sword One would have to sit still for whatever the Combine could dish out.

The Combine units were doing their best. Nine globes of light--estimated enemy positions--moved toward the defensive line. Two . . . three . . . suddenly shrank to pinpoints--confirmed sightings. One of his own screening points died, then, and the enemy points slowly diffused again. One suddenly winked out, and another began to blink. Good!

Vanetti shot a look "westward" at the lights representing Sword Two's area. He blinked. Then, suddenly, he understood . . . and sweat trickled down his forehead. While his own units had stopped their side of the attack, Two had not been so lucky. Only two squads of infantry were still



reporting. Two was intact and pulling back--but there was no way it could escape. At least four enemy GEVs were alive over there, and looking for blood.

His own position was better--for the moment. Two active enemy units on his side of the map, one more crippled. And they weren't moving fast enough to escape. Vanetti barked orders into his mike, sending his remaining infantry into action--*toward* the enemy hovers.

"Sword One to Sword Two. Get back this way." Even as he said it, he knew the order was futile--tracks were just too slow. But it was worth a try. "Leave ours to the iron men. Help Two," he told the gunner.

It almost worked. The "iron men" of Shield One climbed all over their three hovers. Sword Two hit one of its own attackers. Sword One crippled another. And three other Combine hovers closed on Sword Two, blew it into superheated gas, and buzzed off toward the north. Seconds later, the "cripple" followed them.

"Sword One to Shield One and Shield Two. Get back here. Form up for defense, centerline 240. They might be back." Then, switching frequencies: "Sword One to Alpha. They're past us. Sword Two bought it. At least four live ones, coming your way. Good luck."

Then, his duty done, he slumped in his chair. Sword One had accounted for three enemy GEVs and come through unscratched. But, it couldn't follow the battle. Even if the hovers turned south again, they wouldn't come this way--not with an open spot just to the west.

Vanetti began to allow himself to hope. He just might live to see tomorrow . . .

* * *

Vanetti was VERY lucky. The scenario could have been Breakthrough or Raid--each starts out with a force of Combine GEVs moving north--but, either way, the defending screen is in deep trouble.

There's really no way to build a secure defensive line with a handful of armor and 20 points of infantry. But, it's interesting to try. One of the best ways is the one just described--a couple of howitzers or mobile howitzers, situated to take advantage of streams and forests, with the infantry in front. The invading GEVs can't get within firing range of the howitzers without overrunning the infantry. They can't go around the infantry without taking unacceptable losses from the howitzers. And they can't snipe at the infantry unhindered; the howitzers' range is too long. What they do, of course, is concentrate on one point, overload the defenses locally, and break through--but it takes a while, during which time reinforcements will keep coming.

Of course, the armor in the screen doesn't have to be howitzers. Either heavy or missile tanks will work--and you get twice as many units. However, it becomes absolutely vital to make good use of terrain in setting up your defensive line--otherwise, the GEVs will get in the first shot and cripple you.

TERRAIN

The treatment of terrain in **G.E.V.** is abstract--though certainly not more so than most wargames. Terrain affects both movement and combat in a fairly standard fashion. GEVs are the most strongly affected by terrain; favorable terrain (roads or water) speeds them even more, while bad terrain (woods or swamp) slows them drastically and can even disable.

To allow Ogres to be used in **G.E.V.** scenarios, terrain effects for Ogres are given. For the most part, Ogres ignore terrain. Swamp, however, is anathema to Ogres; they can get STUCK. Heavy Tanks have most of the same movement abilities as do Ogres--reasonable, since the Ogre is just a highly-evolved Heavy. One provision--the ability of Ogres and Heavies to totally ignore woods and streams--is definitely unrealistic. There would be *some* effect, even though "woods" is taken to mean fairly light forest, and streams are small. However, heavy and super-heavy armor ought to be able to treat such obstacles fairly lightly--and, for game purposes, the best way to show that proved to be the simplest. As a result, heavy tanks--(and Ogres, if you have them) are most effective behind streams and in woods, which is just where the GEVs are least useful--which can have a number of interesting tactical ramifications.

Towns slow movement but provide defensive bonuses for all units. Demolished town hexes (and there are a lot of those, especially in the Raid scenarios) have the same effects on both movement and combat--another inaccuracy in the interest of simplicity. Actually, an area of demolished buildings should provide slightly less cover (for armor, anyway) and impede movement more. The added complexity didn't seem worth it.

INFANTRY

One of the most depressing features of **OGRE** (realistic, but depressing) was the way the infantry units died, and died,

and died. Sometimes they made all the difference (to me, one of the marks of a good **OGRE** player is the way he handles his infantry), but even when they saved the day, they were cannon fodder.

It doesn't work that way in **G.E.V.** The reason? Simple. In **OGRE**, the infantry were in a very bad position--terrain with few hiding places, and a very thick-skinned opponent covered with AP guns. **G.E.V.** gives the infantry the benefit of some "traditional" infantry abilities. To me, this makes sense. A lot of things will change in a hundred years . . . but if we're still using infantry, we'll still be using them to take and hold ground. Infantry aren't fast; they don't have long-range weapons. But, they can go nearly anywhere, and they're hard to kill.

G.E.V. simulates this in two ways. First, the infantry can enter absolutely any terrain on the map . . . even water, though they can't fight while "swimming" in their suits. Furthermore, they get the best defensive bonus for terrain: doubled defense in woods or swamp, and tripled in towns.

Second, of course, is the overrun rule. This cuts two ways, and both are good for infantry. In a defensive role, the infantry can spread out in a line to stop enemy movement; any unit which tries to move through (overrun) that hex will be fired on before it can fire. In an offensive role, two or three squads of infantry can move onto a single enemy armor unit; the enemy unit will fire first and get some of the infantry, but the infantry will almost certainly finish off the armor unit (unless it's a Heavy Tank) when they fire . . . and since overrun fire takes place during the movement, the attacking infantry will get a second chance to fire, afterwards. In EITHER case, the attack strength of infantry units is doubled in overrun attacks, reflecting the increased utility of infantry weapons at close range.

We toyed with the idea of increasing the range on infantry weapons--allowing the infantry to fire on all non-Ogre units at a two-hex range, while retaining the one-hex range against enemy Ogres. However (though this satisfied everyone who enjoyed seeing the infantry clobber tanks), it took some of the flavor out of the game. With the present rules, infantry *has* to keep to cover and do its fighting at close range. When it does, it's deadly.

One other rule that didn't make it into the final **G.E.V.** package was "specialist" infantry: engineer units and heavy-weapon teams. The engineers would have had the ability to blow bridges (or construct pontoon bridges) at need; the heavy-weapon teams would probably have had the ability to act (once) like missile tanks, as far as attack ability went, after which they would be replaced by regular infantry counters. Either type would also have the ability to take over enemy installations under certain circumstances (though, if a heavy weapon unit which has expended its missiles is replaced by a regular counter, it shouldn't lose its special knowledge! Small problem.) However, we simply couldn't work the special infantry types into the counter mix without taking out too many of the other units--so this idea was knocked out fairly early. It may surface again, in an expansion set.

* * *

THE NEW UNITS

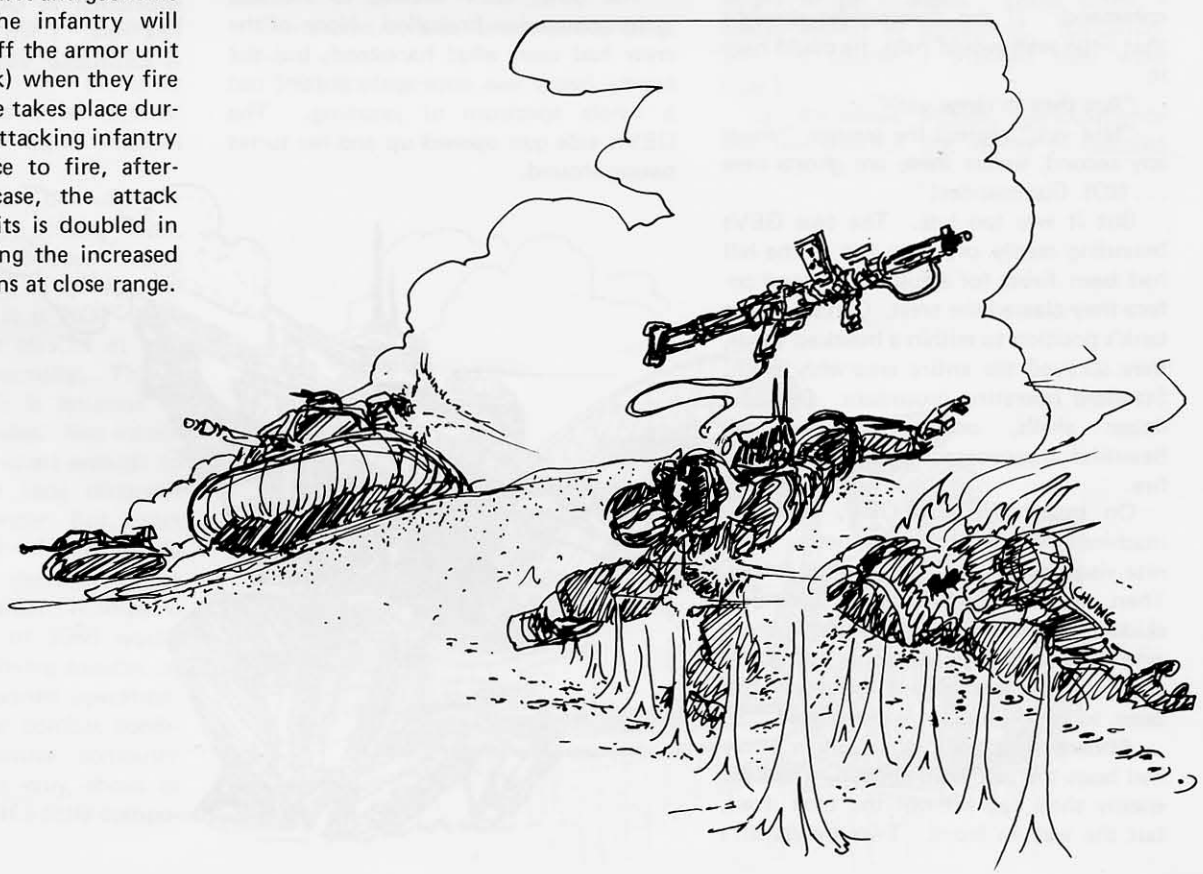
Three new unit types are presented in **G.E.V.**: the Light Tank, the Mobile Howitzer, and the Ogre, Mark IV.

The Light Tank was originally developed for **OGRE**. It didn't survive the first few rounds of playtesting, though; it proved to be the least useful unit type, and there were enough different kinds of units without it. However, by cutting down its defense slightly and making it cost only half as much as the other tank types, it became a viable unit for **G.E.V.**

The Light Tank has a movement of 3--the same as a Heavy. In all other ways, it is like a GEV: its attack strength, and range are 2. However, a player can take *two* light tanks instead of one "armor unit." Thus, the strategies, based on large number of relatively cheap units, become possible.

The Mobile Howitzer was definitely a case of "popular demand." Practically everyone who wrote to comment on **OGRE** suggested adding a long-range unit with some movement ability. As first playtested, the MHWZ had the same defense (D1) as the howitzer. After playtesting, its defense was increased to 2.

Since the MHWZ gives flexibility to a defense, and can be used in an attacking role if necessary, it is generally more usefule than the regular HWZ; the two cost the same. Occasionally, its two extra hexes of range make the regular howitzer



the better choice--such as when enough other units are available to guard the howitzer's own position.

The Ogre Mark IV specifications are listed in **G.E.V.** Rules for playing Ogres are NOT given, except where they interact with new rules (such as terrain). Thus, **G.E.V.** does NOT duplicate **OGRE**, but builds on it. However, if you already have **OGRE**, and use Ogres in **G.E.V.**, the Mark IV specification given will make sense to you.

The Mark IV is a "raider" type unit. A mark IV, though fully as expensive as a Mark V, would not be able to stand up to the V in a slugging match. The IV's advantages lie in speed (it starts with M4 movement) and range (it carries 20 missiles, fired from "missile racks.")

"Okay, Beautiful. Do your stuff."

"Beautiful"--more formally known as Unit 11, 22nd armored, Third Army Paneuropean--didn't respond. Heavy tanks don't talk. Her commander had never quite seemed aware of that. Nobody was likely to criticize him, though. A man who had been through an even dozen firefights without serious injury was a man deserving respect. The fourteen silhouttes in a neat row on the turret elevated him to near-godhood. Even if he *did* talk to the damn tank.

"All right. Get us behind that wall." He was addressing the driver, now. Corporal Paskos didn't question the command. If the commander thought that little wall would help, he could have it.

"Are they in range yet?"

"Not yet," replied the gunner, "visual any second, unless these are ghosts here . . . NO! Commander!"

But it was too late. The two GEVs bounding madly over the top of the hill had been firing for a full half-second before they cleared the crest. Certain of the tank's position to within a hundred yards, they sprayed the entire area with death. Standard operating procedure. Out of a dozen shells, one was well-aimed. Beautiful disappeared in a gout of red fire.

On board the lead GEV, eyes and machines reported the same news. Definite visual contact with an enemy heavy. Then, a fireball. The two hovercraft skidded down the hill, their paths diverging slightly. The lead gunner turned his scope on the spot where the heavy had been, to see if a mopup was required.

Aboard Beautiful, the gunner's cry had been the last word spoken. Then the enemy shell had hit--not the tank itself, but the wall in front. Two meters isn't much . . . but the difference between a contact nuclear blast and one two meters away was enough. Beautiful's BPC hide was blast-burned and rock-pelted, but unbroached. Her crew, though . . .

Inside, no one moved. BPC armor and cast circuitry can take more punishment than a man. A long time (to the tank) went by with no new orders from any of the three crewmen . . . no perceivable action at all. A second after the shell hit, an orange button lit by each of the three men. None of them punched it. None of them did anything at all.

With the mechanical equivalent of a shrug, Beautiful took matters into her own hands. A pressurized tank jutted stimulants into the ventilation system. As for the situation outside . . .

Seventeen units were within sensor range; an additional twenty-three were included in the latest date pulse from CP Beta. Eleven were known hostiles. Two of those were immediate targets; Beta's pulse listed them as hostiles, they were within mutual firing range, and they didn't respond to Beautiful's own IFF. They were, in fact, the two attacking GEVs.

As the BEV's gunner focused on the blackened Heavy, he muttered under his breath. The armor looked intact. Better put a couple of rounds into it, just to be safe. As his hand tightened on his firing control, he realized that the "dead" tank's main gun was tracking him . . .

The other GEV skewed to the side as its companion fireballed. None of the crew had seen what happened, but the enemy heavy was once again putting out a whole spectrum of jamming. The GEV's side gun opened up and her turret swung around.

Beautiful rolled to the side. Her short-range radar showed an obstruction to the left; she was programmed to take advantage. Her jamming devices went on and off in random patterns, sending messages and images designed to fool every type of sensor up to and including the human eye.

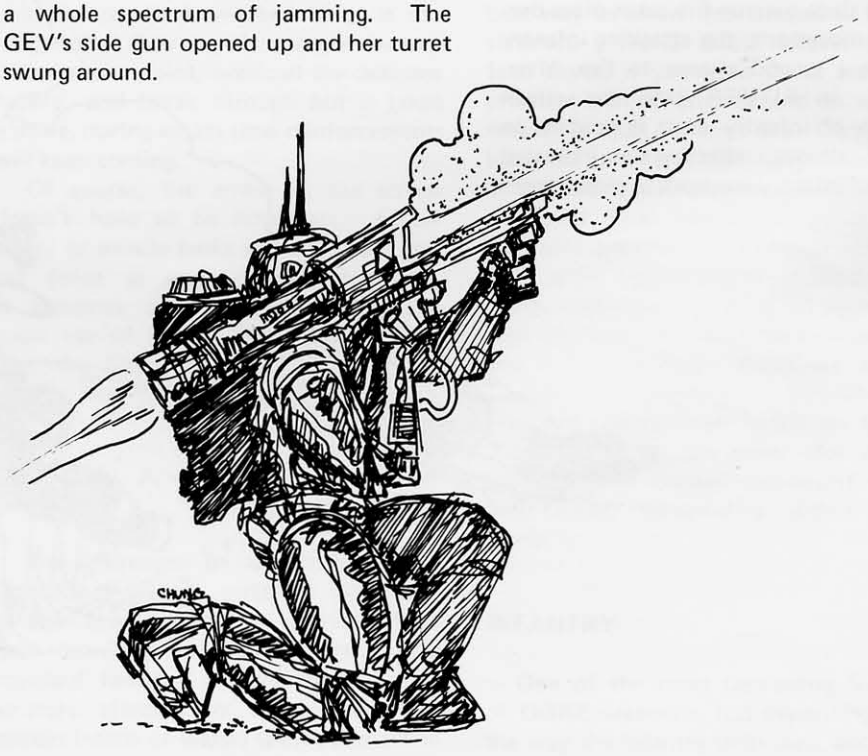
The surviving GEV was in full flight now. Whether its gun was being controlled by human, computer, or both, it wasn't hitting. Shells exploded in all directions, but none came within twenty meters. Even the humans inside could have taken that. Beautiful hardly noticed. Her own gun came to bear, fired, fired again . . .

Inside Beautiful, the commander woke and shook his head. "Paskos! Ferguson!" He looked at his screens, and shook his head again. No enemy units within six klicks? "Paskos, make for 1412. We may still be able to do some good." He hit switches to transfer gun control to his own position; Ferguson had a concussion, or worse.

Back at base, he would order the maintenance men to put the new kill-silhouettes in a new column, just as though the tank had had a different commander. Beautiful had gotten those two on her own.

STACKING AND OVERRUNS

One of the basic simplifications (read: shortcuts) in **OGRE** is the one-unit-per-hex rule. I felt (and still feel) that this is justifiable, especially on a nuclear bat-



tleground. However, it's not *physically* impossible to get units closer together . . . and each hex on the **G.E.V.** map represents considerably more area. So stacking *is* allowed--up to five units per hex--with the provision that, if one unit in the hex is fired on, other units in that hex also suffer an attack at reduced strength and effect. It's not illegal to stack--but it's often unwise. If you *have* to concentrate your force into a small area you'll do so--but, just like a real field commander, you'll be biting your nails at the thought of what a concentration of nukes could do to your units.

Of course, if you can stack with friendly units, you ought to be able to move in on enemy ones. I threw out the **OGRE** concept of "ramming" here, thus occasioning the only real discrepancy between the games. (Everything else in **OGRE** can be taken as a special case of the **G.E.V.** rules.) The result was a somewhat complex, but realistic, set of overrun rules. (However, if you think *they're* complicated, you should have seen the FIRST draft! Alexander Epstein, one of the playtesters, suggested a better way to do it; the final rules are a cross between his suggestion and Lynn Willis' Close Assault rules from **OLYMPICA,** with further simplifications.)

Basically, any units can move onto any other units, thus occasioning an overrun attack. Combat occurs immediately. All defenders fire once; all surviving attackers then fire back . . . and so on, until only one side remains. Because of the deadlier nature of close-range combat, all "D" results count as "X" (no units are disabled, they're destroyed instead) and both infantry and Ogre weapons fire at double strength.

Overrun combat has one further aspect--which I'm really pleased with, because it adds another science fiction element to the game. If an already-disabled unit is overrun, it is NOT automatically eliminated; it attacks at half strength and defends normally. This is because EVERY vehicle is assumed to have an on-board computer. Not intelligent, not an Ogre, not smart enough to maneuver or fire over long distances without a human commander. But, smart enough to take control of the vehicle and attempt to defend itself while the crew is out of commission. (I imagine that the tank designers of 2085 would tout *all* their armor as being capable of "fully automatic", unmanned operation; I also expect that, under combat conditions, relatively inexpensive computer "brains" would perform only about as well as the rules reflect. If a *little* computer could replace a man, there'd be nothing out there but Ogres.)

* * *

John DeVries was no soldier, but his reflexes were excellent. When he heard the explosions behind him, he pulled the car off the road, slewed it around, and killed the motor almost without thinking. Then he curses himself bitterly. "Cease-fire," indeed. He had probably just gotten himself killed--and his family, too.

From the back seat came a chorus of questions. "What's happening, Papa? Are we there yet?" His wife, white-faced, soothed the children.

Then a plume of dust appeared on the road--moving the way they had been traveling, and growing. "Look! A Convoy!" cried the older DeVries boy, excited. Military convoys were great fun to the eight-year-old; sometimes the soldiers were friendly.

The "convoy" whipped past, ignoring the little civilian vehicle canted on the roadside. Six hovercraft, with Combine markings. It wasn't a terror-raid, though, or they would have fired on the car . . . Minutes passed.

Then the sky lit to the north, toward town, and DeVries understood why the GEVs hadn't bothered to shoot at them. They had had bigger game in mind.

"Quick, love, get the kids out of the car. We'll head for those trees over there."

She stared at him, uncomprehending. Leave the car?

"They'll be back."

* * *

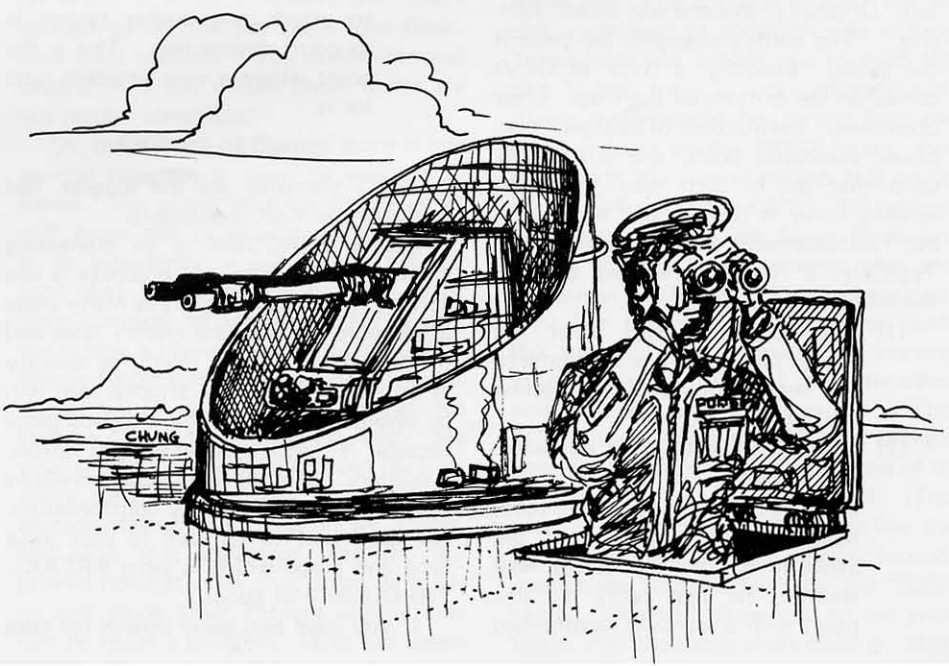
PLAYTESTING

G.E.V. underwent the most thorough pre-publication playtesting of any Metagaming game to date. In addition to the local (Austin) group of playtesters, copies were sent to about twenty individuals or groups around the country for "blindtesting"--that is, playtesting without the (dubious) benefit of personal contact and discussion with the designer. Most of these were people who had written articles or comments about **OGRE**, of such a nature that we thought they could make worthwhile contributions to a *new* game in the genre.

The playtesters, almost without exception, did an excellent job. They had been given a mass of material to work with and examine (the first packet sent out contained a complete draft of the game; a supplementary packet about a month later contained changes, additions, corrections, and suggestions of the playtesters themselves). I was pleased (and relieved) when the letters began to come back in, and it became clear that most of the rules were being read the way I had intended. In some cases, of course, they weren't--and that indicated where to rewrite.

However, the playtesters did more than just point out the weak spots in the writing. They were also quite up-front whenever they felt something ought to be changed. Quite often, I found myself in agreement. (Occasionally, of course, I thought they were nuts.)

On the whole, though, this experience left me sold on the merits of detailed



playtesting. Certainly, the playtesting added to the time and expense of finishing the game. On the whole, though, I think it was worth it; the efforts of the playtest groups made **G.E.V.** a faster, clearer, and more realistic game. I appreciate it.

SCENARIOS

G.E.V. includes four scenarios, each with several variants (including Ogre variants, naturally!) Each of the four is different.

CEASEFIRE COLLAPSE is a straight slugging match. The players have equal forces; the objective is simply to do as much damage as possible to the enemy. This game could easily be adapted to a much bigger map--say, a Panzerblitz or Strategy I hexsheet--or a do-it-yourself terrain map. This is a good scenario for sharpening your general tactical ability.

THE TRAIN is also a slugfest; typically, it starts with an incredible hammer-blow attack against a heavy defense, and the rest of the game is mopping-up by one side or the other. Since the important question is the survival of the train, though, neither player can afford to spend too much attention on the wholly military objective of destroying enemy armor. The attacker needs a good balance between heavy units (to smash the defender's combat capability) and GEVs (to harass the train, cut the track, or both). The defender needs to be everywhere at once; if he is willing to accept heavy losses, he can win.

RAID got the most playtesting here in Austin--probably because it's a lot of fun. Originally, this one was titled "Atricity." The name's changed; the game is the same. Basically, a force of GEVs comes on the bottom of the map. Their objectives: destruction of bridges, town hexes, command posts, and any enemy units that get in their way. The defending force is pathetically weak . . . but reinforcements come in every turn. Typically, a RAID game goes through the following stages:

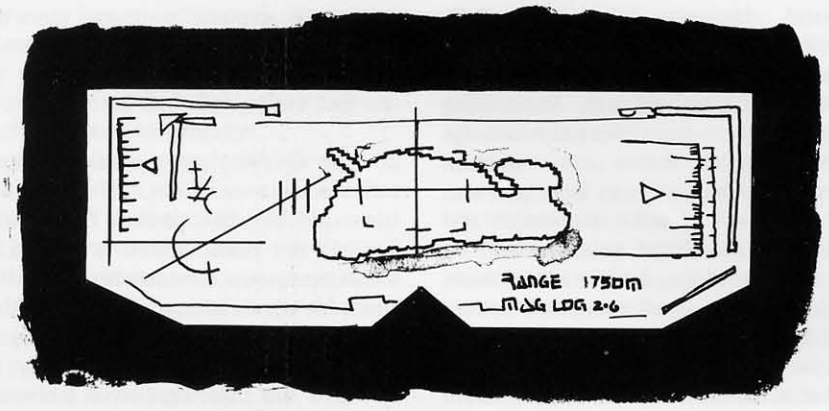
(1) The attacking units enter the board, pick up a few easy targets, and begin probing assaults against the defending screen.

(2) The defending screen is bypassed, or collapses, or both, taking a few GEVs with it. More town hexes get blown away. If the attacker handled his units well enough, he can retire at this point with a marginal victory--but usually, greed will overcome prudence.

(3) The defender begins to organize his reinforcements. Since both the type of unit and the place are randomly determined, he never gets what he wants--but sometimes, as the song goes, he gets what he needs. You may wind up with a few infantry units far away from the action--but, once in a while, you'll get a missile tank in just the right place to waste a GEV that was miles away from any other defender. It evens out.

(4) At least half the attacking units are gone; the defender has whipped his random reinforcements into some kind of shape. The GEVs are going after a major town complex somewhere on the board, and the defender is sweating blood.

(5) All of a sudden, there are only a few attackers left. They still have superior mobility (unless the defender picked up and kept a number of GEVs himself), but to attack any futher targets is to court destruction. This is the point where a wise attacker runs for it.



RAID scenarios are the longest, but probably the most challenging.

BREAKTHROUGH is an interesting situation. The attackers' objective is not combat--it is simply to get as many units as possible through the enemy lines and off the board to the north, as quickly as possible. Thus, the attacker can win by *avoiding* combat. This is a good game because it teaches an important lesson: a military operation does not necessarily call for immediate, bloody confrontation. It's important to be able to pick your time and place--which is what BREAK—THROUGH is all about.

If you have two game boards (or take careful notes about what units leave the map and when) you can combine BREAKTHROUGH and RAID. Use the RAID victory conditions only. Use the BREAKTHROUGH setup with 16 GEVs; GEVs (and defending units) leaving the map to the north immediately enter the RAID scenario. The RAID defense is set up as for the 12-GEV game, and reinforcements do not begin on the RAID map until turn 8. Thus, the sooner the attacker can get his units onto the northern map, the more damage he'll be able to do. The maps should be arranged so that one is directly to the north of the other, with the roads connecting. The river will *not* connect; no matter. The BREAKTHROUGH defensive setup is placed on the southern board, and the RAID defensive setup on the northern one. All units may move freely between boards. Defenders may escape from the N, E, or W side of the northern board. Attackers may escape only from the S side of the southern board.

Of course, any number of other scenarios can be concocted. One letter I received suggested a scenario in which a damaged Ogre is moving slowly back toward friendly lines; a relief force is coming out to escort it in, and an enemy force is coming to finish it off. That can be interesting. We also had fun with a RAID varient using Heavy Tanks, instead of GEVs. A force of Heavies makes a bad enemy, grinding across and through the streams and forests toward your vulnerable areas. Interestingly, where the best tactic or a GEV group is to bunch up and hit one weak area, a Heavy Tank force seems to do best by coming in along a broad front and smashing everything in its way. Look out for infantry, though; a Heavy can sometimes live through an overrun, but it *can't* dodge it. Hit the infantry, before it hits you!

CHITIN: I another look

by

David Norwood

CHITIN: I, the simulation of the battle between two small hives for the Vlaro (food) harvest, evolved from the tactical development of the strategic level game, **HYMENOPTERA**. When Howard Thompson decided against combining strategic and tactical formats, it became Microgame no. 2. (I guess he figured "Why waste good brain power?")

One of the **CHITIN** player's main problems is Basics, and the problem with Basics is Plunges. The minimum of Plunges (in existing scenarios) is 8 strength points. Basics have a defense of 1. Add that Plunges can quickly and easily reach the basics with their Megahex movement, and you've got trouble. During a few of my earlier games, both my opponent and myself would destroy each other's Basics, and end up fighting the battle with completely disrupted forces (which allows for little, if any fighting). With Basics, there are three options, basically (no pun intended . . . Well . . .) One, they can be left in the open, in which case you can write off the game. Second, Warrior units can be set in hexes adjacent to the Basic. This works well against Plunges, but later, in the end game, the mobility of your forces is restricted. And, unless you completely surround your Basic (a losing proposition), a couple of Termagants or Renders can easily get to the hole and do the Basic in. The third alternative, the one I have had greatest success with, is to stack two-unit Phlanxes and Gantuas and the Basics. This gives Basics a good defense, doesn't restrict the speed and mobility of your forces, and allows one to commit the Basics' combat potential with less risk. Also, with the Basics actively involved in the battle, there is less chance of units needing to go outside command control. The commanding unit goes with them. It could be argued that this arrangement will restrict the Gantuas and Phlanxes when making a charge attack. However, as far as movement goes, there are few instances (at least in my case) of the need for a charge attack at six hexes distance. Most of the battle (and therefore, charge attacks) take place in the center of the map, with the forces in close proximity. But, if it is necessary to move six hexes (or, in any case, six movement points) distance to perform a charge attack, it is a simple matter to break up a Termagant mandule and have the two Termagants provide temporary cover for the Basic until the Gantuas can again provide more substantial cover (that is, if the Gantuas are still around when your opponent finishes with them). There is one other plan that I have seen at various times in TSG. It involves placing your Basics in the woods and thus halve the attack strength of enemy Plunges. But again, there is no defense against land units and actually, very little against Plunges. A full Plunge force will still get (at least) a 4 to 1 attack, and that's enough to do the job on a lone Basic. And what happens if you need command control in a hex whose forest hexes are not readily accessible?

On the subject of Plunges there is one general rule, get as many as you are allowed. The player with the most Plunges will begin the game with an advantage in air superiority. I will go into the reasons that this is such a problem later. This question of air superiority is also the reason a player should never separate Plunge forces into separate Megahexes. If done, your opponent can move his Plunges into the Megahex with the smaller force and wipe them out (or hurt them some). This may give *him* the aforementioned advantage in air forces, and with that advantage (and the improved combat odds that come with it), he can erode *your* Plunges away. This can be quite a problem. With the basics now reasonably secure from Plunges, the Plunges' main mission is no longer one of Basic suppression. (No longer may they prey upon the practically defenseless Basic. Now, they earn an honest living) They are more concerned with maintaining air superiority; covering important Megahexes from enemy Plunge attack (such as the ones through which workers are traveling), along with a minor skirmish or two in a heavy battle. Thus it can be seen that without Plunges, workers are prey to the enemy Fliers. At the same time, his workers have practically free run of the field. Keeping Plunges unified will maintain the combat odds at 1 to 1, and neither you nor your opponent will attack unless you feel lucky . . . or desperate.

About the best strategy in **CHITIN: I** is to win the initial die roll (to determine who goes first and from which side). If by chance (or whatever method you use) you do win, pick first move. This will allow you to be the first to reach the 'A' chit, regardless of approach side. Using Termagants will enable you to reach the chit in two turns if lucky, three if not. (Being lucky would be starting from the side bordered by the '2000' hexes. For those with the second edition, this would be the side with the CRT.) This side is best because there are fewer River and Rough Terrain hexes between you and the center of the field. But if your opponent has played a few times (or reads this article), don't count on starting there. Even if you start from the other side, you will be adjacent to the 'A' chit in two turns and your ZOC will prevent your opponent from gaining control of it.

Sometimes you lose the die roll. (Too often it seems to me.) If you do lose the throw, and find yourself moving second, choose the side bordered by the '2000' hexes. This will allow you to get your forces into the battle more quickly. With

some luck, you can get a retreat result against the covering units, and gain control of the coveted 'A' chit. A good tactic would be to split up your forces and attack your opponent from two sides. To cover his workers approach, he will have to set up a three-sided defense and he'll be spreading himself thin. Of course, there's no law that says you *have* to go after the 'A' chit. If you see your opponent is committing most of his forces to gaining the 'A' chit, you can maneuver to the side and go after one of the three chits on his side. This will put you ahead by ten points and if you escape without too many casualties, you'll be okay.

At one time I tried a strategy similar to the GEV strategy in **OGRE**. That of using primarily one type of unit. Somehow it didn't work out quite as well as in **OGRE**. The only one that partly worked was the all-Termagant/Low Render strategy. The way I had it figured, the Termagants and Renders could advance at top speed, get into my opponent's territory, and tie up his Warriors long enough to give my workers a chance to grab the harvest. My entire force would then make a hasty "advance to the rear". Flawless, huh? What I failed to consider was the high attrition rate my forces would undergo. The strategy worked the way I planned, but the heavy casualties my opponent inflicted nearly negated the lead I had.

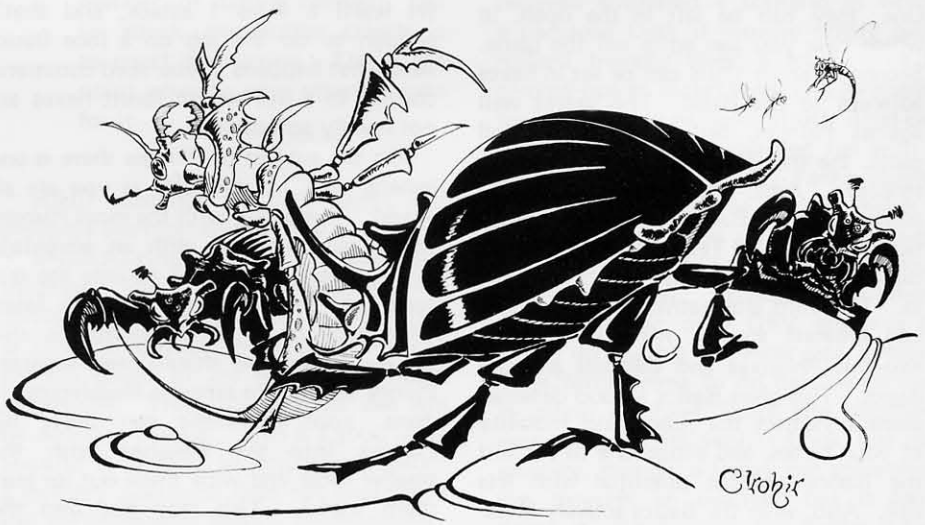
The all-Gantua/Phlanx strategy is a whole 'nother story. With this strategy, I chose one mandule of Termagants in addition to the Phlanxes and Gantuas. I figured the Termagants could cover the 'A' chit while the slower units moved up. I knew the Termagants were going to get slaughtered, but I figured they would last until my Gantuas and Phlanxes got there. They would then, with a few well-timed charges, go through my opponents smaller forces like a juggernaut, and leave his smaller force of Phlanxes and Gantuas overmatched. *Sigh* Again, things didn't work out the way I planned. Remember those Termagants that were supposed to last until the Gantuas arrive? They didn't. They were wiped out in the first attack. By the time my Gantuas arrived and got through my opponents front line forces, his workers had the chit and were gone. The main reason for my Termagant's short life span was that there was nothing protecting their flanks. My opponent was able to bring to bear a large force of Termagants and Renders and secure a 5 to 1 attack (automatic elimination for the defender). Usually I would have other forces on the covering unit's flanks thus forcing my opponent to spread his forces over a larger area.

This proves, I guess, that a general mix of forces is best in **CHITIN: 1**. You need fast (although weak) units to give you a quick (but temporary) control of the area in question, and strong (yet slow) units to back up and reinforce your foothold. Then you need the Plunges to give you control of the air, Workers to do the (get this, now) work, and your Basics to keep everybody organized.

Of course, whatever method you use to get your Workers in control of the harvest, there still remains the problem of getting them safely away with it. The main headache is the Termagants and Renders who can, unless blocked, easily run down the slower Workers and put them to the sword, so to speak. An effective tactic arises from the fact that by the time you're about to run, the battle has broken up into three main skirmishes, those being over the A, C, and F chits. In order to cover my Workers' retreat, I extend the flanks of my three forces and form a solid line. The whole line then retreats in front of my Workers. Admittedly, the line is relatively weak and will suffer casualties, but it usually will serve the purpose of giving the Workers time to escape with the Harvest.

I'd like to say a few words about the second edition of **CHITIN: 1**. Both the map and rulebook have been changed somewhat. One is the color of the map. It has gone from the cream-color and blue map of old to a sort of . . . uh . . . green. This, in itself, isn't *too* bad, but the CRT and adds table have both been shrunken. This, combined with the darker color, make them harder to read than the original map. The CRT, adds table, and **CHITIN: 1** logo have been removed from one side, also. "But David," you may ask, "with one CRT shrunken and the other removed, what has been done with all that space?" Our friends at Metagaming have (bless them!) enlarged the individual hexes. No longer must you fight to position your forces. You just zip them right in there. (In the process of enlarging the hexes, a row of hexes has been knocked off of either side. Other than this, however, the terrain is unchanged.)

The rulebook has undergone the same sort of superficial change. The content has remained the same, but the package is different. Where I was somewhat critical of the map, I can only praise the rulebook. The paper it is printed on is the slick type, like **WarpWar** and subsequent MicroGames. The cover painting is of a Plunge poking a Gantua's eye out, while the Gantua makes a futile attempt to grasp and crush the slender form of the Plunge. (You may recognize this as Paul Jaquay's cover from TSG no. 14.) The inside front cover (also by Jaquays) shows the inside of a hive as a group of Flyers (not Plunges, though) launch themselves for a raid. A train of bugs climb a winding staircase to the opening in the roof while two of the Flyers settle a minor dispute. The original front cover (that of one bug Warrior slitting the Throat of another) is now on the inside back cover.



ENCOUNTERS of an UNLIKELY KIND

by

Mike Crane

Date: 4/18/2132

Location: Somewhere in the Middle East (possibly Israbia).

TB1(Tiny Bopper 1): TB1 reporting to BCPC (Bopper Control & Production Complex). Acknowledge contact.

BCPC: Contact acknowledge. Proceed with scouting reporting.

TB1: Southern area barren except for an abnormally large object moving at high speed in a northerly direction. Advise of further actions.

BCPC: Close to determine type and intention.

TB1: Have closed to within 5 kilometers. GLUT (Great, Large Unidentified Trivia) appears to be a much larger version of a BB (Big Bopper). GLUT still advancing in a northerly direction at high speed. Advise of further action.

BCPC: Close in closer to further describe.

TB1: Have closed to within 4 kilometers. GLUT appears to have 2 large batteries, 6 smaller batteries, 12 batteries even smaller, and 6 missiles. GLUT has proceeded with hostilities by opening fire upon me. Advise of further actions.

BCPC(To all units except TB1): Report to BCPC for re-programming immediately.

BCPC(To TB1): Continue observation.

TB1: Am hit, am hit, am hit, am hit . . . static . . .

BCPC(To newly programmed units): Go out and destroy your assigned piece of armanent.

Units then advance toward GLUT and are wiped out faster than BCPC can build new ones. The BCPC, seeing the GLUT cut through his units like a knife through butter, orders them to fall back and defend the BCPC. The BCPC then comes under fire and seeing that the situation is useless, gives out its last command: "defend to the death, to the death, to the death . . .static . . . ".

For all you confused people out there, the GLUT was an Ogre Mark V. Knowing this, you can construct many hypothetical situations by combining **OGRE** and **RIVETS** into one game. To combine the two games you need the following:

Rule Changes For ORATS (**OGRE, RIVETS,** and Trivia Spliced)

Changes to **OGRE:**

2.016 Misc. Terrain. The map used is the **RIVETS** map and some changes are needed: Swamp & Forest are considered craters to the Ogre, and rivers are treated as clear to the Ogre.

4.02 Turns. The turn sequence is now:

Ogre Moves
Ogre Fires
Control Factor Check
Move Missiles/Units
Builds
New Programming
Combat (By RIVETS)

6.02-.03 Unit Strengths. All **RIVETS** units use **RIVETS** rules for strengths.

6.05 Ogre Movement Points. Due to the change in scale, the Ogre's movement has been changed as reflected by the revised Ogre record sheet (10.0).

6.101 Antipersonnel. Antipersonnel may also be used against the BCPC.

10.0 Ogre Record Sheet. Movement and weapon ranges have been revised to reflect the change in scale.

6 missiles (6/8; D3) 000000
2 main battery (4/5; D4) 00
6 secondary battery (3/3; D3) 000000
12 antipersonnel (1/2-only against BCPC; D1)
000000000000
60 movement

00000 00000 (movement drops to M5)
00000 00000 (movement drops to M4)
00000 00000 (movement drops to M3)
00000 00000 (movement drops to M2)
00000 00000 (movement drops to M1)
00000 00000 (movement drops to M0)

Rules Changes in **RIVETS**

5.00 Turns. See 4.02 in Ogre rule changes.

8.01 & Missiles. Movement remains the same but AM and AA types are eliminated. AG missiles now have a strength of 3 attack points. Note: Ogre weapon systems count as a separate unit for Rivet programming purposes. This means that each Rivet type must be re-programmed from attacking Rivet units (of which there are no enemy rivets) to attacking one Ogre weapon system (missiles, main and secondary batteries, antipersonnel, and movement).

To play out **Close Encounters of the Unlikely Kind** do the following:

The RIVETS player starts out on the northern board section, and has a superior complex and 15 starting units, one of which must be a TB and 10 of which must start on the southern board edge. None may start inside the BCPC.

The Ogre player has a Mark V, and starts off the southern board edge. Victory conditions can be determined by the players, but a basic set of victory conditions are:

Complete Ogre Victory: Ogre destroys BCPC and escapes off map edge.

Ogre Victory: Ogre destroys the BCPC and is destroyed.

Rivet's Victory: BCPC survives, Ogre destroyed, and 15+ units survive.

Using this as a basic system, many scenarios can be devised. What would have happened if a force of Rivets attacked a human CP? What would have happened if some units had survived and had tried to take over a BCPC, maybe even with the help of an Ogre or a rival BCPC? The possibilities are endless.

ADJUSTED ORC RULES

by

Paul C. Wagner

Anyone reading the article entitled "Orcs and Their Weapons" in No. 15, probably discovered that the Orcs were given quite a number of advantages with nothing lost in return. Unfortunately, this made Orcs rather overpowering opponents and turned them into frustrating rather than challenging opponents to fight. The author of the aforementioned article should be brought to justice for this, and I'd like the chance to turn myself in and explain. I truly wanted the Orcs to be worthy opponents, but I now think that some rules were overdone and others not thoroughly explained. If the editor would please give me space, I'll rectify the errors.

ORC MAIL (armor)

Drop it. This stuff is just too powerful, and there's no way to adjust it for a really decent solution, I was trying to give the Lesser Orcs a break, as they seem constantly to be whipped by man opponents, However, outfitting Greater Orcs in this same armor makes them horrendous opponents, and the problem is magnigied rather than solved. The best solution is to drop Orc Mail entirely, and just let the Lesser Orcs rough it.

OGRE PLATE (armor)

Adjust it to stop 4 hits, dropping both DX and movement by 5. This simply makes it a midpoint between chain mail and regular plate armor.

WARG HIDE (armor)

Keep this; it's relatively harmless. It is also great for small creatures like Goblins, Hobgoblins, and Lesser Orcs, guys who simply cannot afford a dexterity drop. (By the way, it stops one point of damage, doesn't affect dexterity, and drops movement by one.) However, it fits only characters of 22 total basic points or less, and not Greater Orcs or men.

THE SCIMITAR

This is not just anybody's weapon--it is a specialty of Orcs and Goblins. The reason it is able to do 1+1 die damage with only a 9 strength is because it is usually poisoned (see J.R.R. Tolkien's **The Fellowship of the Ring,** pp.435-436). If you choose it as the weapon for a basic human fighter, it is exactly the same as the rapier or club, both in damage it does and in strength needed to hold it.

THE ORC SPEAR

Taking a look at the scimitar, a 9 strength 1+1 weapon does not seem unreasonable; but observing pole weapons, it definitely is. Make the Orc spear a 10 strength 1+1 die weapon. It is still two-handed, and it still may be thrown. It is not exclusive to Orcs as a weapon though the name seems to imply this.

THE GREAT GLAVE

Here is a mistake similar to that of the Orc Spear: too much damage for too little strength. Reduce it to a 2-1 die, 12 strength Orc weapon. All glaves can't be thrown, Glaves are exclusive Orc weapons.

Apologies to all who used my first suggested set of Orc rules and came to grief. My intentions were good, but I didn't play-test thoroughly enough. I will never complain about a game's release being held because of further playtesting. These corrections do fix everything though, as I believe any **MELEE** player will find out.

ADDITIONAL UNITS for IMPERIUM

by

Richard Bartucci

Conflict Game Company's **IMPERIUM** has justly been called one of the best science fiction wargames of 1977. An ingenious gamesystem is built around a familiar SF theme, the rise of an upstart Terran federation in the face of opposition from an old but still powerful stellar Empire. With excellent graphics, **IMPERIUM** is a game of sweeping movement, of colonization and conquest. It tends to remind one of a streamlined version of the granddaddy of all SF wargames, **Metagaming's STELLAR CONQUEST**. Narrower in scope and less flexible than its predecessor, it moves faster and is somewhat easier to learn, making it a valuable acquisition for the SF gamer.

The counter mix offers the Terran and Imperial players ship units of varying costs, strengths and weaknesses. Terran ships tend to have higher beam combat factors than their Imperial counterparts, making them deadly in close-range encounters. Imperial ships, however, have higher missile factors, useful in long-range battles and in planetary bombardment, the prelude to invasion. A broad spectrum of ships are available, ranging from transports to battleships, to be constructed through the expenditure of resource units (RU's) in the production-and-maintenance phase of each turn.

Necessarily, the game could not include every type of ship known to SF readers, and this article is an attempt to provide supplementary unit types.

IMPERIAL UNITS (Table 1)

Minelayers (ML) are small starships with hyperspace drives capable of deploying a screen of mines within a star system. If an ML spends 3 consecutive turns undisturbed by combat in a system, on the next turn and every turn thereafter, enemy units entering the system sustain a 1-factor attack on the missile CRT in the movement phase in which they enter the system. This attack is resolved prior to the following combat phase. Three ML's require 2 turns.

Fleet Repair Ships (AR) are auxiliaries which can operate at friendly outposts to offer Civilized Maintenance.

Defensive Cruisers (CD) are warships with screens heavy enough for a capital ship, but little offensive armament. They are designed to electively screen weaker units in combat. During ship allocation, a CD may be allowed to shield one other unit, even if the opposing player has a superior number of ships.

Maulers (MM) are heavy cruiser-type starships with no missile factor but a powerful beam factor, designed in response to the high Terran beam factors in common use.

Attack Carriers (CV) are lightly armed and better protected versions of Mothership. Each CV can carry up to 3 Fighter units, and can lauch and retrieve that number per combat round.

Table 1: Imperial Units

Type	B	M	S	Main	Cost
ML	0	0	1	1	4
AR	0	0	1	1	8
CD	1	0	7	3	10
MM	8	0	6	4	10
CV	1	0	4	4	10

B--Beam Factor
M--Missile Factor
S--Screen Factor
Main--Maintenance Number
Cost--Production Cost in RU's

Table 2: Terran Units

Type	B	M	S	Main	Cost
APD	0	0	2	1	2
AR	0	0	1	1	8
CA	5	8	6	4	14
CB	8	8	8	5	15*
R	1	2	1	1	4
CV	1	0	4	3	10

***CB's may be produced only after the Terran player loses at least one Dreadnaught (B), either in combat or by attrition.**

TERRAN UNITS (Table 2)

Attack Transports (APD) are stripped-down old Destroyers fitted out to carry Troops down to the ground in the invasion of hostile Planetary Surfaces. Because these obsolescent ex-DD's are more agile than underpowered Transports, they are treated for the purpose of planetary defense fire as having a screen factor of 7, being allowed the die roll modification when landing. Each APD unit can carry one troop counter, but no other sort of cargo.

Fleet Repair Ships (AR) are similar in design and purpose to their Imperial counterparts.

Attack Cruisers (CA) are a Terran attempt to combine high missile factors with heavier screen and beam factors than are available on Strike Cruisers.

Battle Cruisers (CB) are capital ships designed to replace the elderly Dreadnaught class, and may be produced only after the Terran player loses at least one Dreadnaught, either in combat or by attrition.

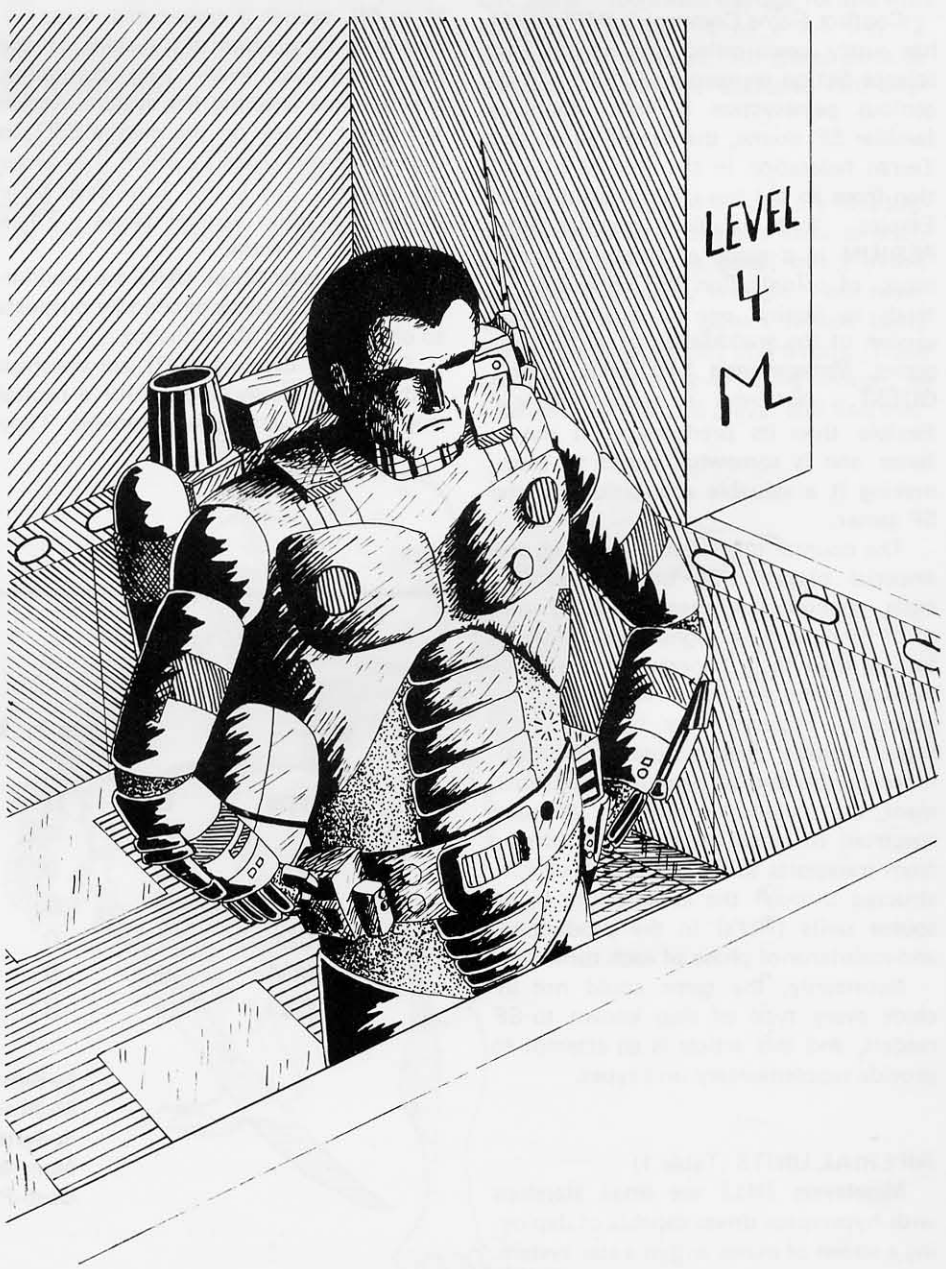
Raiders (R) are lightly-armed starships equipped with sophisticated anti-detection gear and designed for commerce destructin behind enemy lines. When Raiders enter a system containing Imperial warships or attempt to jump through such a system, the Imperial player rolls one die; a result of 5 or 6 means that the enemy warships have detected the Raiders and may bring them to battle. If the result is 4 or less, the Raiders may elect to move on or to stay. If the Raiders stay in the star system, they may remain passive and undetected during the Combat Phase or they may attack. In the first combat round of such an attack, an undetected Raider quadron may make a missile attack on any Imperial starship unit in the system and the enemy may not reply. After this, the Raiders are presumed to have revealed themselves and combat proceeds normally with range determination in the next round of combat.

Imperial ships entering a system containing Raiders may attempt to engage them. The Imperial player must make a detection roll in the Space Combat Subphase to bring the Raiders to battle.

Attack Carriers (CV) are similar in design and purpose to their Imperial Counterparts.

Of all the supplementary units listed, the Fleet Repair Ships (AR) can make the Greatest change in the game. With these auxiliaries, counterparts of the repair ships and tenders developed by the U.S. Navy in W.W. II, capital ships can be maintained at distant outposts without fear of disruption.

Defensive Cruisers (CD) are useful in protecting vulnerable transports from planetary defensive fire, as well as in shielding disrupted capital ships. Maulers (MM) are their compliments, with heavy offense but minimal screen factors. Raiders (R) and Battle Cruisers (CB) explain themselves, while Attack Carriers (CV) are simply Motherships a bit more able to go in harm's way.



MODIFIED RULES for IMPERIUM

by

Walter Mizia

After playing the campaign game of **IMPERIUM**, I found two rules which I feel should be changed in order to speed up play and make the game more realistic. The first is the rule covering maintenance and disruption. The current maintenance rule causes the excessive use of die rolls in the Maintenance and Production Phase. It also unnecessarily complicates the combat resolution procedures when disrupted ships are involved. I believe that the original maintenance rules were designed to reflect the cost of logistical support to the fleet, restrict deployment of major units, limit the number of units in the game, and introduce "command control" into the game. My modifications retain all but the "command control" function. I feel that in the grand stategic scale, a player should have the option to make the decisions that the original rules give to a little spotted cube.

The second area I would change is the rule that allows any starship with a combat factor to completely block a hex to enemy transit or retreat. It is unrealistic to have a 1-1-1 scout ship exert such iron control over a volume as vast as a solar system so that a fleet of stellar battleships are unable to enter that system without being stopped or destroyed. Starships popping through from hyperspace may be at a disadvantage when confronted by an established defender, however, given sufficient force, logic dictates that there is some point at which the offensive weight of a force negates the advantages of an entrenched defense. Rules that allow this 1-1-1 scout to absolutely thwart the movement of a fleet of 12-9-9 battleships are a step backward in the state of the art. A type of "overrun" procedure, some form of which can be found in almost any wargame, is called for.

The following rules replace the original Maintenance section of the rules booklet and all references to the disruption of starships.

***

Maintenance

The phasing player is required to perform maintenance during his Maintenance and Production Phase each game-turn. Maintenance represents the cost of logistical support necessary to keep the major starship types in fighting trim. Maintenance is performed in systems with friendly worlds, in systems with friendly outposts by paying a 3 RU penalty per outpost per turn, and in other hexes by paying a 5 RU penalty per hex per turn. The penalty for not performing maintenance is the loss of that starship and any cargo it may have been transporting.

The following list contains the starship types requiring maintenance and the cost of that maintenance in RU's.

Type	RU's
BB	3
B	4
CA	2
CR	2
CS	2
CL	1
DD	1
M	1

Units not listed do not require maintenance with the exception of troops.

Troop counters that begin a player turn while being transported or while in a planetary box that does not contain a friendly outpost or world require the expenditure of one RU per troop for maintenance.

Salvage Value

Starships that are lost due to the failure to pay maintenance costs, or, by attrition at the end of a game, return RUs to the owning player's Resource Unit Chart. This return represents the salvage value of the lost unit. The list below contains the starship types having a salvage value and the amount of that value in RUs.

Type	RU's
BB	5
B	4
CA	3
CR	2
CS	2
CL	1
M	1

Starships not listed do not have a salvage value. Salvage value RUs are added to the Resource Unit Chart at the end of the phasing player's Maintenance and Production Phase and may not be used that turn. Units lost during the Interwar Attrition Phase at the end of a game also return salvage value RU's which may be used to purchase units for the next war.

***

The following changes replace the rules which forbid transit of starships through enemy occupied systems or retreat into enemy held hexes.

Blocking

Starships cannot transit any system or hex occupied by an enemy starship with a combat factor unless:

1. The blocking starships retreat before combat.

   or

2. The transiting ships destroy the blocking starships in the first round of combat. All, some, or none of the transiting starships may then continue on for one more jump and then conduct normal operations in that new system. Starships which remain behind may also continue normal combat procedure against planetary boxes.
3. If the blocking starships are not destroyed in the first exchange, no further movement is allowed the transiting starships and normal combat in the blocked hex continues to completion.
4. Monitors always block a hex and are not subject to the above rules.

Retreats

Starships retreating from a battle may not retreat into a system containing an enemy starship with a combat factor unless:

1. No enemy monitor is in the system.
2. The retreating force has a combined missile factor that exceeds the combined defensive factor of the blocking force by three times.
3. The blocking starships each get one free fire at a target of their choice and add two to that die roll. The blocking force then has the option to retreat.
4. If the blocking force remains, the retreating force must then destroy the entire blocking force in the first exchange of normal combat, or the retreating force is destroyed.

If the retreating force satisfies the preceeding requirements, it remains in the system but makes no further move nor performs any other offensive combat function the remainder of that phase.

Gamers are attracted to a particular wargame by a combination of that game's environmental setting, game mechanics, and scale. If, in the gamer's mind, an aspect of this combination is flawed, the gamer owes it to himself to make that component conform to his expectations. The preceeding modifications reflect corrections in what I consider deficiencies in the original rules. They have made playing **IMPERIUM** more enjoyable for me, and I hope they can do the same for other gamers.

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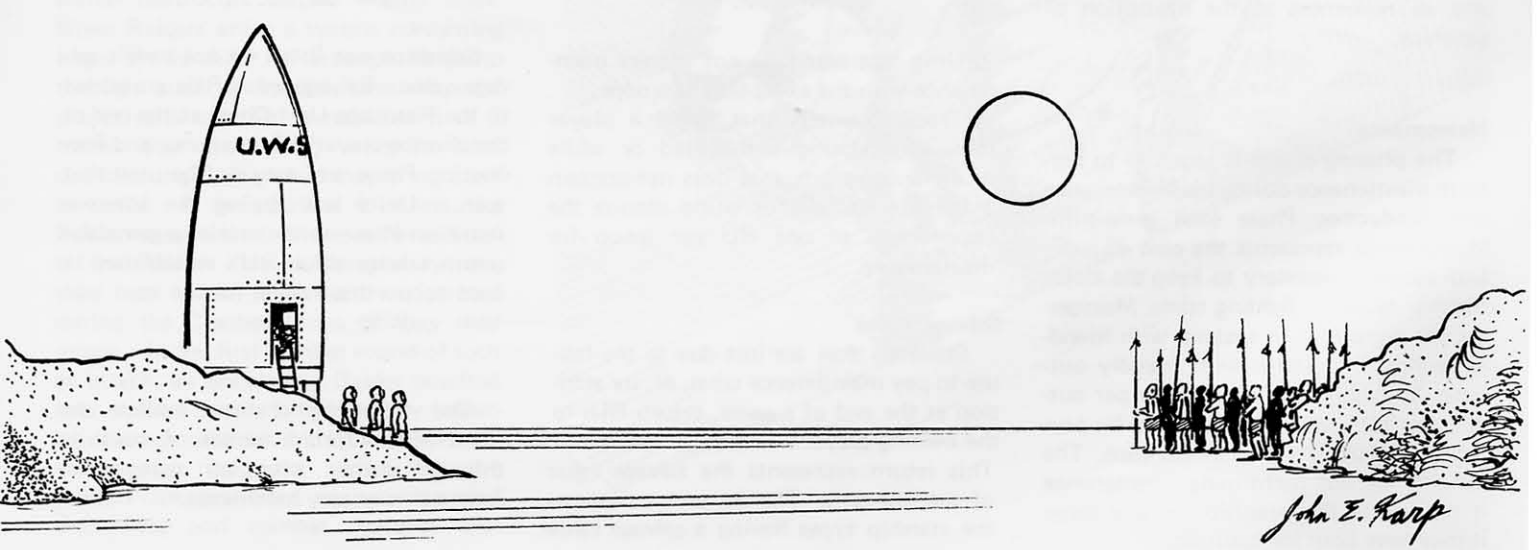


NEWS & PLUGS

Gaming Conventions:

GLASC III: (June 30-July 2) Campus of CSU, Northridge, CA. Tournaments, miniatures, and supergames. Membership $3.50, dorm rooms available. Info: SCUN Simulation Gamers' Assoc., Box 163, Northridge, CA 91328.

NANCON: (July 2) Nan's Toys and Games, Galleria Mall, Houston, TX. D&D tournament with prizes. Mem. Purchase of a TSR item at Nan's between May 1-June 25. Info: Nan's Toys & Games, 1385 Galleria Mall, 5013 Westheimer, Houston, TX 77056.

ORIGINS: (July 14-16) University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. The major gaming con of the year. Tournaments, seminars, panals, workships & much more. Info: Send SASE to Metro Detroit Gamers, c/o Al Slisinger, 12554 Dresden, Detroit, MI 48205.

WORLDS AT WAR 78: (July 28-30) Phila., PA. Tournaments with cash prizes, movies, demonstrations, auction, costume contest. Info: James Brown Advertising, Convention Agents, 9223 Andover Rd., Phila., PA 19114.

GENCON XI: (August 17-20) University of Wisconsin-Parkside, Kenosha, Wisconsin. Major gaming con. Info: Send SASE to TSR Hobbies, Box 756, Lake Geneva, WI 53147.

WARGY 8 (August 19-20) ? Info: Rick Plankinton, RR6 Box 52, Columbus, Nebraska 68601.

FLYING BUFFALO CON 6 (August 25-28) Scottsdale, AZ. Info: Send SASE to Flying Buffalo Inc, Box 1467, Scottsdale, AZ 85252.

PACIFIC ENCOUNTERS tm '78 (Sept. 2-4) Villa Hotel, San Mateo, CA. Another of the major gaming cons. Boardgames, tournaments, miniatures, lectures. Info: Send SASE to Pacific Encounters '78, Box 4042, Foster City, CA 94404. This con was formerly titled GEN. CON. WEST '78.

Science Fiction Conventions

WESTERCON 31 (July 1-4) Marriott Hotel, Los Angeles, CA. Guests of Honor: Poul Anderson, Don C. Thompson, Jerry Pournelle. Membership $10. Info: Westercon 31, Box 5785, Mission Hills, CA 91345.

UNICON IV (July 7-9) Sheraton Silver Springs, Silver Springs, MD. GoHs: Theodore Sturgeon, Lin Carter, Fred Pohl. Mem. $7. Info: Unicon IV, Box 263, College Park, MD 20740.

EMPIRICON (July 14-16) Taft Hotel, New York City. GoH: Alfred Bester. Mem. $7. Info: Susan Rothman, 35 Seacoast Terrace, Brooklyn, NY 11235.

AUTOCLAVE 3 (July 21-23) Sheraton-Southfield, Southfield, MI. GoH Terry Hughes, Derek Carter. Mem. $7. Info: Lea Zeldes, 21961 Parklawn, Oak Park, MI 48237.

PARACON I (July 28-30) Sheraton Penn State Inn, State College, PA. GoH: Barbara Genand. SCA and comics programming. Mem. $6. Info: Para-Con, c/o Ramsey, 622-C West Beaver Ave., State College, PA 16801.

BUBONICON X (August 25-27) Ramada Inn East, Albuquerque, NM. GoH: Gordon Dickson. Mem. $3.75. Info: Mike Kring, 6413 Academy NE No. 13m Albuquerque, NM 87109.

IGUANACON–36th WORLD SCIENCE FICTION CONVENTION (August 31-September 4) Adams Hotel, Phoenix, AZ. This is *the* major SF con of the year. Members vote on the Hugo awards. GoHs: Harlan Ellison, Bill Bowers, F.M. Busby. Supporting mem. $7, attending mem. +25. Info: Iguanacon, Box 1072, Phoenix, AZ 85001.

FOURTH WORLD FANTASY CONVENTION (October 13-15) Sheraton Hotel, Ft. Worth, TX. GoH: Fritz Leiber. Mem. $15. Membership will be limited to 750. Info: Mike Templin, 1309 S. West, Arlington, TX 76010.

Plugs

McEwan Miniatures has a number of new releases. For a complete catalogue of their products, send a SASE to McEwan Miniatures, 840 West 17th South, Salt Lake City, UT 84104.

Realm of Yolmi is a new science fiction role-playing game. Realm is an 8½ x 11, 118 page ringbound rule book. Available for $8.00 from West Coast Games, 1987 Santa Maria Way, Sacramento, CA 98525.

Flying Buffalo will put you on the mailing list of all the major and minor game companys if you send them a post card with your name and address clearly printed on it. There is no charge. Send your post card to Flying Buffalo Inc, Box 1478, Scottsdale, AZ 85252. Just ask to be placed on the combined mailing list.

Gaming news

Barsoom. SPI, having recently acquired the game rights to the John Carter of Mars series, will develop a semi-role playing board game out of the exploits of Edgar Rice Burroughs' famous hero.

Fantasy Games Unlimited will soon release a set of naval rules for the ancient, medieval, and renaissance periods. These rules will be compatible with the Chivalry and Sorcery gaming system.

Avalon Hill is planning a number of expansions to Squad Leader. These "Gamettes" will be boxed and include new counters, mapboards, rules and scenarios.

A readers' poll in **Games and Puzzles** magazine, the foremost British gaming zine, produced the following results to the question of most popular games: No. No. 1 Diplomacy, No. 2 Kingmaker, No.3 Dungeons and Dragons, No. 4 Hare and Tortoise, No. 5 Scrabble.

Science Fiction News

1978 Nebula Award Winners

Best Novel-**Gateway** by Fred Pohl

Best Novella-"Stardance" by Spider and Jeanne Robinson

Best Novelette-"The Screwfly Solution" by Raccoona Sheldon

Best Short Story-"Jeffty is Five" by Harlan Ellison

Things That Came In The Mail:

The Gamesman: Mimeo, 8½ x 11, 60 pages. Emphasis on miniatures and chess. Single issue $1.50, sub 3/$5. The Gamesman, c/o D. Miller, 12315 Judson Rd., Wheaton, MD 20906.

The GMS Review: Mimeo, 8½ x 11, 10 pages. Review zine covering boardgames and SF/Fantasy games. Single issue 30 cents, subs 12/$3. The GMS Review, c/o D. Miller, 12315 Judson Rd., Wheaton, MD 20906.

The GMS Newsletter: Mimeo, 8½ x 11, 10 pages. News zine covering boardgames and SF/Fantasy games. Single issues 30 cents, subs 12/$3. The GMS Newsletter, c/o D. Miller, 12315 Judson Rd., Wheaton, MD 20906.

The Flying Buffalo's Favorite Magazine: Offset, 8½ x 11, 10 pages. Topics generally include Starweb, Flying Buffalo's computer pbm game, Tunnels and Trolls, fantasy role-playing game. Single issue $1, subs 6/$4. Flying Buffalo Inc., Box 1467, Scottsdale, AZ 85252.

Signal: Mimeo, 8½ x 11, 8 pages. Excellent little news zine covering the hobby. Capsule reviews of new games, cons, and general gaming news. Subs 5/$1. Signal, 1011-B ST. Laurent Blvd., Ottawa, Ontario, K1G 1A3.

Counter–Moves: Ditto, 8½ x 11, 4 pages. "Postal periodical for play-by-mailers." C-M is oriented toward the pbm crowd. Features include game articles, reviews, and an opponents wanted section. Subs 12/$3. Counter-Moves, c/o Jerry Epperson, Lot 52, Chris Lake, RR No. 3, Omaha, NE 68123.

Wyrms' Footnotes: Offset, booklet, 50 pages. The Chaosium's magazine with articles on their products, but also includes a variety of reviews and news on other games. Single issue $1.50. subs 5/$6. Wyrms' Footnotes, Box 6302, Albany, CA 94706.

Enfilade: Offset, digest size, 56 pages. Features detailed articles on boardgames with a good column on game design. Single issue $1.50, subs 6/$6. Enfilade, Box 160, SAPC, Laurinbur, MC 28352.

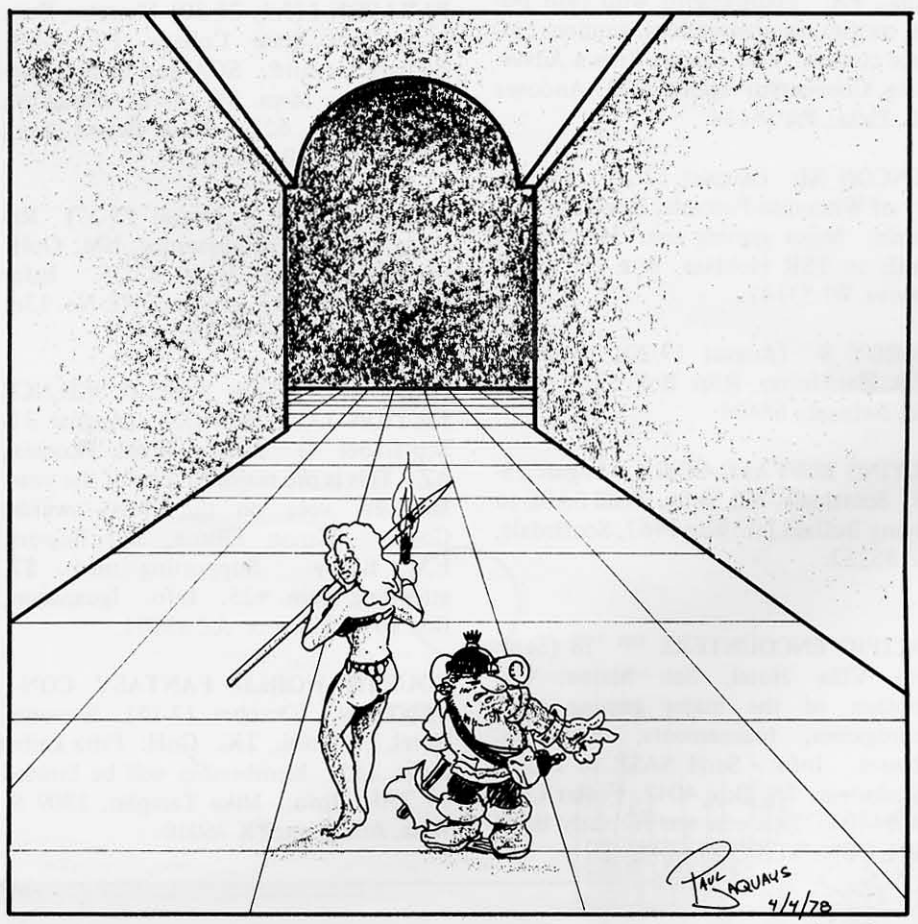
Spartan: Offset, 8½ x 11, 30 pages. Simulation gaming journal that is professionally produced with a wide variety of articles, news, and reviews. Single issue $2, subs 6/$9. Spartan, 630 W. Willow St., Long Beach, CA 90806.

Miscellaneous News

Error Correction-Issue No. 15 of TSG failed to carry the TSG subscribers price of $2.50 for DEATH TEST. Thanks to all of you that let us know about it.

Quote-**"OGRE is one helluva good game . . . and you can quote me . . ."** from Dr. Jerry Pournelle. And the good doctor may quote The Space Gamer that we think he is one helluva good writer.

MICROGAME TOURNAMENT: The Ohio Valley Wargaming Association is sponsoring a MicroGame tournament that looks like a sure winner. There is a 50 cent entry fee for **OGRE, MELEE,** and **WIZARD** until July 1. From then on, the registration fee goes up to $1.00. They will also have other MicroGames in the tournament if the participants request. Along with your entry fee, send the names of your favorite micros, listed in order of preference. Event to be held at the Armed Forces Reserve Center in Evansville, Indiana. Mail registration is to be sent to: Ohio Valley Wargaming Association, c/o Guy W. McLimore, Jr., 2304 Harding Ave., Evansville, IN 47711. Also, more info can be obtained from ABC Hobbycraft, 2155 E. Morgan Ave., Evansville, For even more updated info, call Guy McLimore at 424-0134 or 477-9661, and Bob Reutter at 985-5759. Metagaming is happy to support this effort to make MicroGames the most interesting, appealing, and down-right fun games anyone can play. This tournament will be loads of fun, we're sure of that.



BOOKS

LITTLE WARS by H.G. Wells (1913) has been re-published in its unabridged form by Da Capo press of New York. This is one of Wells' non-fiction books, and covers wargames and theories of Kreigspiel. There are many line drawings and photos of the author 'at play'. Although of little use to the modern gamer, this book stands as an interesting volume. Possibly the first book on war games, LITTLE WARS is a bargain for $4.95 in this large paperback format.

THE GIRL WITH THE JADE GREEN EYES is the latest novel from John Boyd (Boyd Upchurch). Boyd is a somewhat erratic writer who's credits include THE LAST STARSHIP FROM EARTH, THE POLLINATORS OF EDEN, THE ORGAN BANK FARM, and THE GORGON FESTIVAL.

TGWTJGE is a fun little book. It is better than most of Boyd's novels, and adds a small touch of comedy in a field where humor is largely non-existent. Boyd takes several swipes at Earth-bound bureaucracies in *his* version of CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND. His aliens are almost-human, green people with sex on their collective mind. A marvelous romp through a Naval examination center and James Bond-like spies with kidnap plans fill most of the pages, but I did enjoy the two hours spent reading. I recommend the paperback which will probably be available in late 1978. THE GIRL WITH THE JADE GREEN EYES is $8.95 from Viking Press.

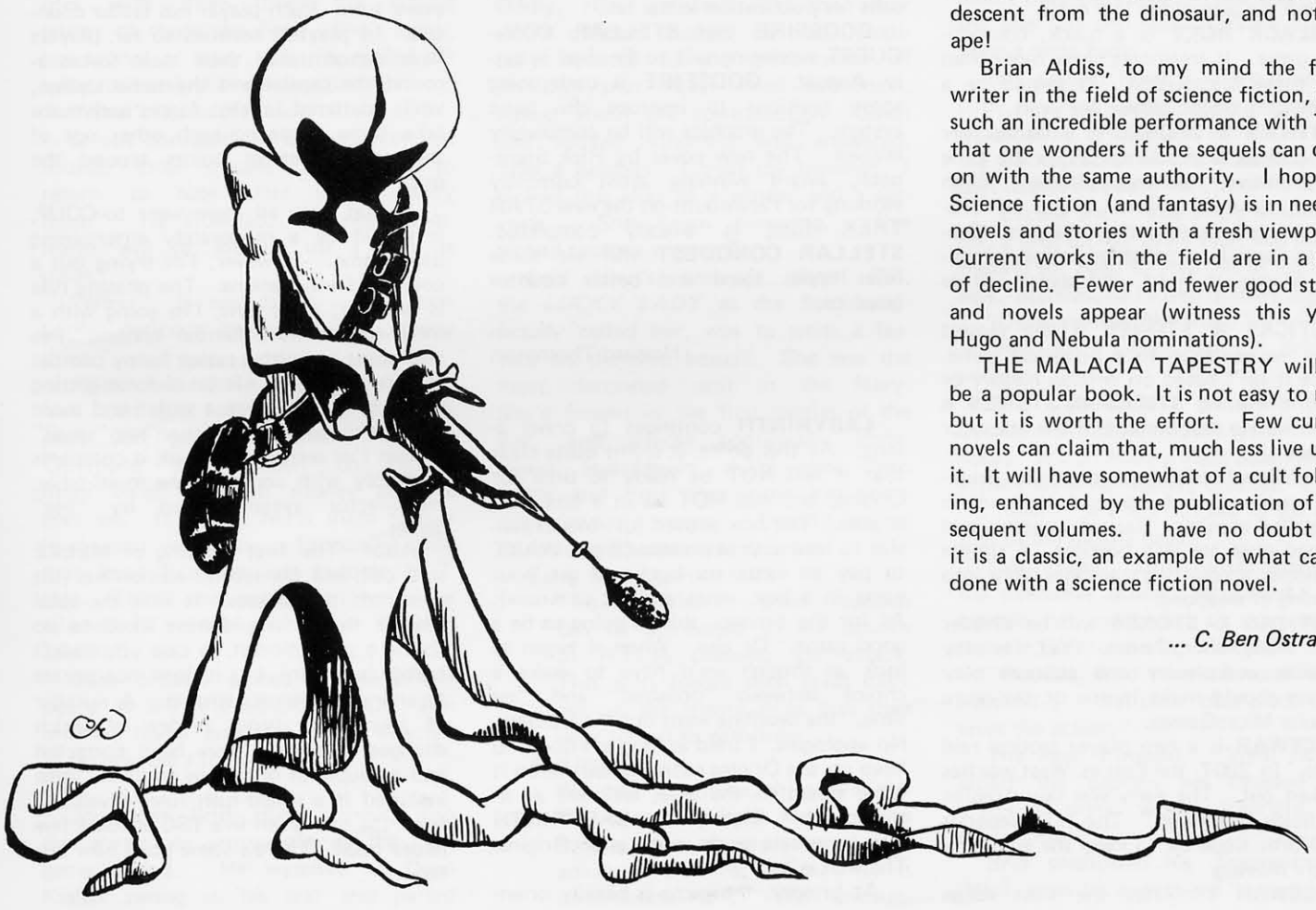
Out at last in paperback is Brian Aldiss' THE MALACIA TAPESTRY For only $1.95, Ace Books puts into your hands one of the greatest "alternate realities" ever written. This 400 page novel, the first of a proposed trilogy, is a stylistic and imaginative masterpiece. The order of the words themselves seems to convey images, impressions and insights much as Aldiss' FRANKENSTEIN UNBOUND cast its horrible spell in the last ten pages. THE MALACIA TAPESTRY holds one's mind like a vice. The Renaissance Era with its stark reality seems to seep up through this tapestry of life.

Malacia, the country of the book, is peopled with a bizarre assortment of soldiers, sorcerors, magicians, priests, and astrologers. Perian De Chirolo, the central character, is both rogue and actor. Given a chance to 'star' in the first 'motion picture', he becomes deeply involved with his beautiful 'co-star'. His trials eventually lead to the ancestral hunt, a contest in which dinosaurs in wilderness areas are hunted for glory . . . and survival. For the people of Malacia claim descent from the dinosaur, and not the ape!

Brian Aldiss, to my mind the finest writer in the field of science fiction, gives such an incredible performance with TMT that one wonders if the sequels can carry on with the same authority. I hope so. Science fiction (and fantasy) is in need of novels and stories with a fresh viewpoint. Current works in the field are in a state of decline. Fewer and fewer good stories and novels appear (witness this year's Hugo and Nebula nominations).

THE MALACIA TAPESTRY will not be a popular book. It is not easy to read, but it is worth the effort. Few current novels can claim that, much less live up to it. It will have somewhat of a cult following, enhanced by the publication of subsequent volumes. I have no doubt that it is a classic, an example of what can be done with a science fiction novel.

... C. Ben Ostrander



DESIGNER'S NOTEBOOK

Current games in preparation are MicroGames, except for **THE FANTASY TRIP: In The Labyrinth.** Several other larger games are in the concept stage, including **WARPLORDS,** but too far off to discuss now.

BLACK HOLE is a two player, tactical combat MicroGame with a unique setting. The location, and object of combat, is a huge alien artifact.

A donut asteriod enters the solar system from deep space. In the center of this alien torus, in the *hole*, is a tiny, but massive, black hole. Equally spaced around the interior edge of the asteriod are three Mascon anomalies. The black hole seems to remain in the center of the asteroid, regardless of gravititic perturbations.

BLACK HOLE simulates combat on the asteriod's surface. Scenarios depict several hypothetical battles for control, based on man's future history with the artifact. Combat units use special low gravity missile and projectile weapons, plus heavy Lasers. The goal of most scenarios is entry to the Mascon centered structures that may be control areas.

The rules suggest time limits for moves that can add greatly to the games's enjoyment. Time constraints give players a feel of confusion and pressure for increased realism. In reality, you really *would* lose track of weaponry whizzing around the asteroid in low orbit.

BLACK HOLE is a quick, competitive game. It resembles chess more than any other MicroGame. It should be a challenging classic played for years.

STICKS & STONES is a two player man-to-man MicroGame set in the time of primitive, neolithic villages. Each player controls a small group of Cromagnon tribesmen and/or villagers. Scenarios include a tribal migration, a solitare Mammoth hunt, and several village raids.

STICKS & STONES is the closest thing we've done to a historical game. While it isn't based on written history or specific events, **STICKS & STONES** is based in the past instead of the future or fantasy.

Individual tribesmen may use primitive weaponry and armor, though not in a detailed manner. Ranged weapons and trained dogs are also possible. A simple economic accounting translates labor into training or weapons.

STICKS & STONES will be simpler than many MicroGames. Yet, its play balance, complexity and solitaire play system should make it one of the more popular MicroGames.

ICEWAR is a two player tactical raid game. In 2007, the East vs. West war has broken out. The early war saw Arabian oil fields destroyed. The U.S. depends on North slope oil to keep the economy barely moving.

ICEWAR simulates the East Asian surface strike over the polar ice at the North slope. Infantry, armored sleds, G.E.V.s, missile sleds, satellites, and ABM systems are used in the fray. There is an initial search phase for the East Asian forces. Also included is a terrain affect rule that lets pack ice vaporize right under units.

ICEWAR will be popular with those enjoying present/future tactical simulations. Raid games work very well in MicroGame format and **ICEWAR** will be no exception.

STARMAN is a tactical, man-to-man future combat MicroGame for two to four players. **STARMAN** is the first of a new future role playing game series tentatively titled **THE ASTROQUEST. STARMAN** is still in early development, but will include weaponry, pricing, armour, and small vehicles. One design goal for **STARMAN** is to have it generally compatible with basics of **THE FANTASY TRIP** system. Characters have strength, dexterity and I.Q., though these will function differently than in **TFT**. You don't need huge strength to carry tremendous destructive capacity.

A **GODSFIRE** tactical MicroGame is also in the works. Its working title is **UNIVERSE**, and Lynn Willis has already completed a preliminary version as part of the revision work on the **GODSFIRE** second edition. Tentative scheduling calls for publication in the fall.

GODSFIRE and **STELLAR CONQUEST** reprinting will be finished in early August. **GODSFIRE** is undergoing some revisions to improve the basic system. The graphics will be completely revised. The new cover by Rick Sternbach, award winning artist currently working for Paramount on the new STAR TREK film, is already completed. **STELLAR CONQUEST** will see some rules typos fixed and better counter graphics.

. . . Howard Thompson

LABYRINTH continues to crawl along. At this point, it seems quite clear that it will NOT be ready in time for Origins, and will NOT be in a box. So it goes. The box proved just too expensive to fool with at present (if you WANT to pay an extra six bucks to get your game in a box, write and let us know). As for the timing: this IS going to be a good game. Or else. When it began to look as though we'd have to make a choice between "polished" and "on time," the deadline went out the window. No apologies. I tried as long as I could to keep on the Origins schedule--but when it came down to the wire, we were all in agreement. Right now, **LABYRINTH** may be as late as six weeks after Origins. The wait will be worth it.

At present, the game is heavily oriented toward the classic "go underground and kill things" format. There WILL be exterior maps, and there WILL be material for players who want to give their adventurers an "outside" life--but the main thrust of the game, as the title indicates, is the caves and labyrinths of a fantasy underworld. Later (next year?), we'll come back and do a more complete city and/or wilderness adventure game . . in the meantime, there's enough material in **LABYRINTH** to allow you to build if you want to.

Playtesting IS going well--that, in fact, is the bright spot. Most of the playtest groups seem to be having fun--and they're constantly coming up with creative additions to the game, and questions that make me work harder to clarify everything.

My other project right now (the one I go to when I need a break from **LABYRINTH)** is a MicroGame, tentatively titled **COUP**. It's not exactly sf or fantasy, but neither is it a "straight" historical simulation. **COUP** represents an attempt to take over the government of an unnamed (probably South American or African) country. One player represents the government; he has the army, the police, and a few rather outdated tanks and helicopters. The other player, the rebel, has a few disloyal cops and "irregular" army units. He also has mobs--more every turn. Each player has leader counters. In playtest sessions so far, players have concentrated their main forces around the capital and the radio station, while scattered loyalist forces and mobs take turns throwing each other out of the other strategic points around the map.

If that were all there were to **COUP**, it would be a moderately entertaining little game. However, I'm trying out a couple of innovations. The phasing rule is peculiar; right now, I'm going with a move-countermove-combat system. I've also come up with a rather funny combat resolution system. It takes some getting used to, but it gives a wider and more realistic range of results than any "small" system I've seen--and I think it compares favorably with some of the multi-table, multi-factor systems used by "big" games.

Also: The first printing of **MELEE** sold out, and the second edition has just come off the presses. It isn't the total rewrite that I would have liked to do (being a perfectionist, in case you hadn't heard, is a pain), but it does incorporate several small improvements. A number of aggravating typos (a few of which changed meanings) have been corrected and a couple of omissions rectified. Also included is a shield-rush rule, developed from the one given in a TSG article a few issues back. There's some good new art, too.

. . . Steve Jackson

LUCKY LADY

by

Ted Butler

The mug crashed to the floor from surprised fingers. "She did it again!", the C section ops officer said incredulously as he sank into the chair next to the console.

The B section ops officer turned and studied the huge ship disposition display. Two enemy system ships were shown as destroyed, and a warp ship in retreat from the Khafa system. One friendly warp ship remained.

B ops slowly shook his head as he asked, "The *LUCKY LADY* again?"

C ops didn't bother to answer. Instead he asked a question of his own. "Sixteen cycles of combat and not only does she survive, she wins. Do you think the enemy will ever get that old ship?"

B ops nodded a little sadly. "She's a fast missile ship with a smart crew, but was declared obsolete four cycles ago. Both sides now build missiles with three times the hitting power of those she fires. She's lucky, but sooner or later . . . " He trailed off sadly, then asked a new question.

"What's her next move?"

C ops shrugged. "Oh resupply, of course, those missile boats have to return to base after nearly every fight." He frowned. "Supply Command will be kicking up a fuss as usual."

"Why?", B ops asked. "She certainly destroys her share of enemy ships."

"Yes, but those little missiles of hers cost just as much as the new ones you just mentioned. Supply Command prides itself on buying more bang for their money as time goes on. It always hurts them to buy level zero weapons. Especially now that level four has just become available. That's one outfit that would be relieved if there were no *LUCKY LADY."*

Both officers turned to the orders board as W3, the *LUCKY LADY*, was ordered home and task force directed to occupy the Khafa system.

Journalist Brid Hlen stepped into the wardroom entry just as the card game ended. He watched as Daan Kialen swung in his seat and patted the nearby bulkhead, then turned back to collect his winnings.

"Why do you always do that," asked one of the men.

Kialen laughed before replying. "For luck. In my years as a professional gambler, I've never seen anything as lucky as this ship. As long as she stays lucky, I'll keep patting her."

One of the men snickered. Kialen responded calmly, "Laugh if you like. I keep patting her and somehow I keep collecting the winnings."

As far a Hlen was concerned, Navigator Daan Kialen, relatively new on board, was the ship's leading character. This stood as quite an accomplishment in a combat crew organized at the war's beginning 16 cycles back. Rumor had it that he had forgiven a base personnel officer's gambling debt in return for a billet on this, the most fought ship in the fleet. Oddly, Hlen gathered that the other ship's officers thought he was fanatically devoted to the preservation of his own skin, never mind patriotism. Asked about the contradiction, Kialen had looked surprised and answered, "I'm a gambler. I trust my hunches. I picked this ship as a winner and a survivor. She keeps surviving. I've picked another winner."

Brid Hlen's presence about W3, the *LUCKY LADY* as the fleet unofficially called her, was to write a feature on the ship herself. She was the most decorated unit in the Navy. She'd fought in the first battles of the war, and almost continually since. Again and again she'd gone into battle and time after time had come out without a scratch. Usually, having caused considerable enemy losses.

Early fleet citations read:

> This mission's great success can be attributed to the actions of W3 in pressing the attack. This ship forced such great damage on the enemy ships that they were forced to withdraw . . .

And later:

> W3 and her sister ships W1 and W2 were singularly successful in forcing the enemy from their advanced base at Elam. It is unfortunate that W2 encountered such heavy damage that her warp drive blew.

And two cycles ago:

> W3 on a scouting expedition against Nippur discovered the system to be held by two system ships of the beam weapon type, whereupon Captain Bren decided to inflict maximum damage . . . the W3 missiles were so well handled that . . . destroying one ship on the first pass and so weakening the other that it too was destroyed in the third combat pass . . . This aggressive action gave us unexpected control of the system and the warp lines meeting at Nippur . . .

Crewmen of the fleet considered her a lucky ship, and shipboard replacements always were taken from many applicants, official and unofficial. Her weapons didn't have the sting of modern ones, but she was fast and maneuverable, and she always came back.

Her present mission, a scout and destroy one, was backed up by reserves two warps away. If she was successful again, the backup force would consolidate the gain within a cycle.

"Excuse me." The ship's missile officer, a grin on her lively face, was politely waiting for Hlen to step out of the entryway. Startled, he moved quickly aside.

"Daydreaming, Mr. Hlen?"

"No, just sorting facts," Brid answered.

"Well, you'd best get them sorted quickly. We enter Mosul system in two hours. It's an enemy main base. I rather expect we'll be warmly greeted. Excuse me now." She left quickly in the direction of the missile bays.

"Mr. Hlen." Brid turned sharply to the executive officer, Mr. Chard. "The captain has responded to your request to be in Control during combat."

"Good," Brid Hlen answered enthusiastically, "that's the best place to observe the action."

The exec frowned. "Well, no, I'm afraid the captain has decided your presence there would interfere with operations."

Brid swallowed his disappointment. "Well, does he expect me to nap in my

cabin then?" he asked with irritation.

"Oh no," the exec answered mildly, unaffected by Hlen's tone. "Captain Bren suggests you will be welcome in auxiliary control. The viewing facilities there are excellent. He has assigned our navigator, Mr. Kialen, as alternate commander for this operation. Mr. Kialen's duties should be light and he has agreed to brief you during the action."

Brid Hlen reflected a moment. Aux control was almost as good as control, and the navigator should have plenty of time to be informative.

Also, it would be a good idea to keep the good will of the exec. "I'm sorry I snapped at you," he said.

"No offense taken, Mr. Hlen," the exec answered mildly. "Perhaps you'll let me help you with your suit and get you settled in. We really should be ready for breakout soon."

"Breakout in two minutes; helm." Except for the captain, every officer followed the usual naval pattern of following his intercom message with the title of the originator. It had been a general message or he would also have preceded it with the title of the officer to receive it. A message without a following title, was, of course, from the captain.

"Helm, at breakout use dodge pattern," came the captain's voice.

"Captain, acknowledged; helm"

"Engineering, set acceleration compensators for a net one g. Set system drive at 7 gs until further notice."

"Captain, acknowledged, engineering."

"Missiles, acknowledge all four missile tubes loaded and ready."

"Captain, acknowledged; missiles officer," answered that officer.

Brid Hlen, suited and strapped into his couch, glanced around at the three ratings strapped in next to their standby consoles. Then he looked to the center of the room at the three-dimensional displays there. The general display was situated above the tactical. Both displays were blank now, resembling fat cylindrical gray clouds.

"Breakout in one minute; helm."

The last minute dragged by slowly.

"Breakout? helm." The general display lit suddenly showing a G class star and three red lights visibly moving toward a green one in the display's center.

"We were expected," Hlen said.

Kialen glanced at him. "No, their computers were programmed for a response at detection of a breakout. They're scrambling for their stations on board those ships right now."

"Observation?" questioned the captain's voice.

"Captain, three system ships closing. One is lagging behind the others; observation."

Daan Kialen in the next seat frowned. "That's an odd tactic."

"Why do you say that?" Brid asked.

"We can only fire on so many targets, and to have an effect we have to concentrate our fire," Dann answered. "It would be better for them to close simultaneously, combining their fire and, for them, hopefully forcing us to spread ours."

"Observation, assign target numbers," came the captain's voice.

"Captain, starboard near system ship is target one. The port near system ship is target two and the farthest system ship is target three; observation."

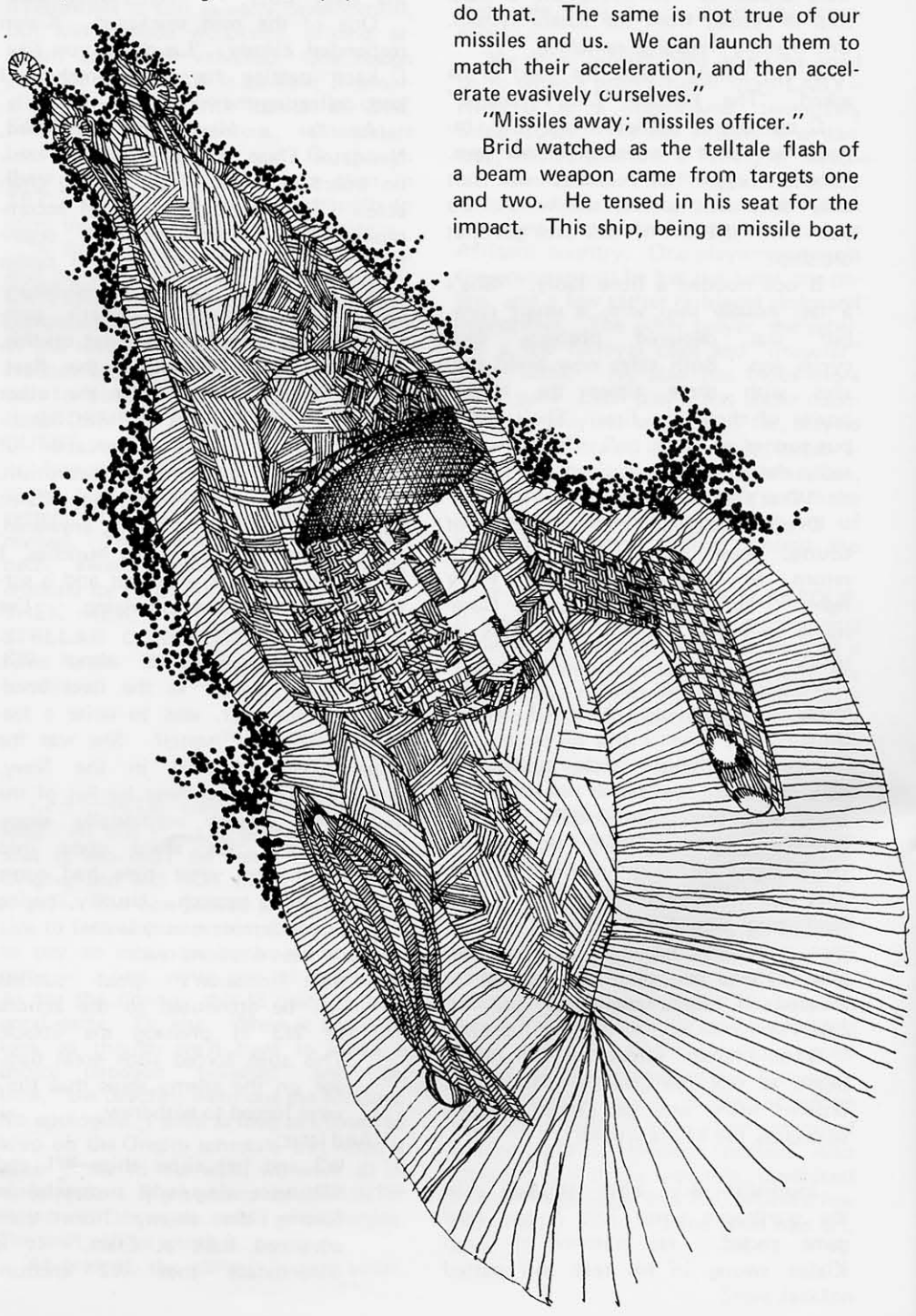
"Missiles, the program for fire round one is; three for target one at 2, 3, and 4 gs, one for target two at 2 gs. Round two use the same programming with target two as primary and target three as secondary. For fire round three use the same programming, tentatively, with target three as primary, secondary to be assigned."

"Captain, acknowledged; missile officer."

Brid glanced to Kialen, who clarified. "The captain is expecting the enemy's usual small, slow accelerating, screen protected beam ships. The enemy likes to build many small beam ships instead of a few highly maneuverable larger ones as we do. If they have done that here, we will have a pretty easy time of it. Their ships have to nearly match our acceleration for their beams to have an effect. Their little cheapies seldom can do that. The same is not true of our missiles and us. We can launch them to match their acceleration, and then accelerate evasively curselves."

"Missiles away; missiles officer."

Brid watched as the telltale flash of a beam weapon came from targets one and two. He tensed in his seat for the impact. This ship, being a missile boat,



couldn't use screens. Then he relaxed sheepishly. The flash had been the whole effect. A beam weapon struck at the speed of light. The enemy beams were unable to stay on target long enough.

"Targets one and two were at 3 gs, target three unknown. Targets one and two fired beams. Nothing came from target three; observation."

"Results;" questioned the captain's voice.

"Targets one and two missed us. Our missiles . . . Sir, target one is gone. We overloaded his level two technology screen and destroyed him. Target two absorbed the hit on his screen with no effect. Both responding targets used level two technology; observation."

Hlen and Kialen watched the general display as one of the red lights faded out. Kialen reached over and patted his console fondly. "Nice Lucky Lady." Brid Hlen grinned in response.

"Very good, second firing as planned." The captain's voice betrayed no emotion.

Hlen watched the one flash in the visual display. Ineffective again.

Kialen frowned. "Why didn't target three fire? He's a system ship. If his forces loose he can't retreat."

The intercom spoke. "Target two missed us. We hit target two with two missiles. My opinion sir, is that he can't take another hit and he will be ineffective until fully neutralized. Target three did not fire, again, and he absorbed a direct hit at full power with no effect. That must be some screen, I estimate it is technological level three at least; observation."

"Missiles, make target three our only target. He is behaving too strangely. Fire three missiles at 3, 5, and 6 gs. Helm, up our drive one g."

"Captain, acknowledged; missiles officer."

"Captain, acknowledged; helm."

There was silence for a few seconds, then, "Missiles away; missiles officer."

Hlen and Kialen were watching the tactical display as two smaller lights detached from target three. On the general display they moved toward the screen center.

Daan Kialen tried to sit up straight against his harness. "That's a missile attack. He must have been staying out of action until he figured our tactics. If he got the drives right . . ."

"Captain . . ." a message started as the lights reached display center. Brid thought he saw one streak past, then the whole ship shook. The overhead lights flickered then came back steady.

"Damage control?" The captain's voice sounded angry.

A tense voice answered. "Captain, two missile tubes out and the drive is damaged. It's capability is reduced by four gs. Four minor injuries; damage control."

"Captain, target two never fired, target three dropped his screen to fire missiles, put on 3 gs acceleration and went into a dodge pattern. One of our birds hit him. I believe it destroyed his screen capability and some drive capability. Revised estimate of his technology level is four; observation."

"My God," a shaken Kialen said. "That one missile did as much damage as three of ours." He paused and patted the console. "Lucky the captain upped our drive, or we would have taken both missiles."

"Helm use retreat pattern at 5 gs. Missiles, how many birds are left?"

"Captain, acknowledged; helm."

"Captain, thanks to a stingy Supply Command, four; missiles officer."

"Missiles officer, noted four missiles. Please keep the extra comments for later. Fire two missiles at target three at 3 and 4 gs."

Kialen pressed his comm button. "Captain, he'll expect us to use 5 gs. He knows he hit us; Navigator."

The voice that responded was calm. "Helm, make that 3 gs. Mr. Kialen, you're right, but please use your correct title for this operation."

"Captain, acknowledged; alternate commander." The navigator released his comm button, and patted his console absent-mindedly.

"Missiles away; missiles officer."

Hlen was getting worried now, glanced away from Kialen back to the general display as the two missiles of W3 and a single one of the enemy's passed each other.

"All misses, we both over-accelerated. His drive was at zero; observation."

Brid looked at Kialen, who was petting his console and grinning.

"Helm, drive at 8 gs. We will attempt to retreat. Missiles, one bird at 3 gs." Then, Captain Bren finally betrayed his concern. He forgot to release his button. The comment was lower voiced but audible. "If only he assumes we'll stay at the same acceleration."

Brid glanced around at the tense faces and wondered if he were looking at his last sights. He looked to the display again as two missiles from the enemy, one visibly faster, passed the one from the Lucky Lady. The slow one looked like a sure miss, the other . . . The ship's fabric screamed as it shook from another hit. The displays flickered insanely then settled. The intercom stayed ominously silent, then.

"Damage control to anyone in Control, please report." There was silence for long seconds.

"Damage control to Mr. Kialen in auxiliary control, it looks like the main control room is gone. In accordance with regulations you are now the ship's commander; damage control."

Daan Kialen looked startled. Then he visibly gathered himself and pressed the comm button on his console.

"Engineering, what is our drive capability? Observation, report. Missiles, report on strike capability; navigator."

No one corrected the title error this time.

"Captain, target three hit us with one missile. His drive was zero again. We hit him with our bird. Nothing from target two. Both ships are hurting bad. Target three could have somethink left. One missile on each, and the system is ours; observation."

"Captain," the voice held regret, "we lost our other two tubes and our last missile. We have zilch for strike. Supply Command; missiles officer." The last comment was uttered like a curse.

In spite of his pale face Daan Kialen managed to keep his voice cool and even. "All personnel, it's time we left something for the backup force to fight. Helm, retreat out system at max power, 4 gs; commander."

Brid looked anxiously at the displays, but nothing came from the slowly dodging target three, or from the stationary target two as the *LUCKY LADY* retreated from Mosul system.

Brid Hlen stepped through the wardroom entryway and sat next to the missiles officer.

She managed a weak grin. "Welcome to our beautiful facility." She waved her hand at the disarray caused by the battle.

Brid tried to bring up a more cheerful note. "Well, at least you nearly wiped out the defenses of one of the enemy's home worlds, and I just heard the backup force was able to take the system."

The other frowned. "That's good, but in the process I'm afraid the enemy wiped out the *LUCKY LADY.*"

Surprised, Hlen blurted, "But even though she took damage, she virtually cleared the system, alone. Surely she'll be repaired and go on to the next job?"

Daan Kialen stepped into the room as the missiles officer answered grimly. "Oh, she'll be repaired alright. They'll probably fix one missile tube and put three missiles aboard her. Then she'll orbit one of our home bases. But, her primary purpose will be to act as a diversionary target should the enemy ever come raiding."

Kialen nodded a little sadly. "Yes, the *LUCKY LADY* has been too badly damaged to be repaired. For what it

would take to repair her, the fleet could build a ship with several times the hitting power. I'm afraid she's gone on her last raid. She'll be retired to base defense, which is essentially decommissioning her. As far as the crew is concerned we'll be sent to other ships."

Kialen stood to get a drink. As he passed the bulkhead, the other two were surprised to see him pat it fondly before returning to seat himself.

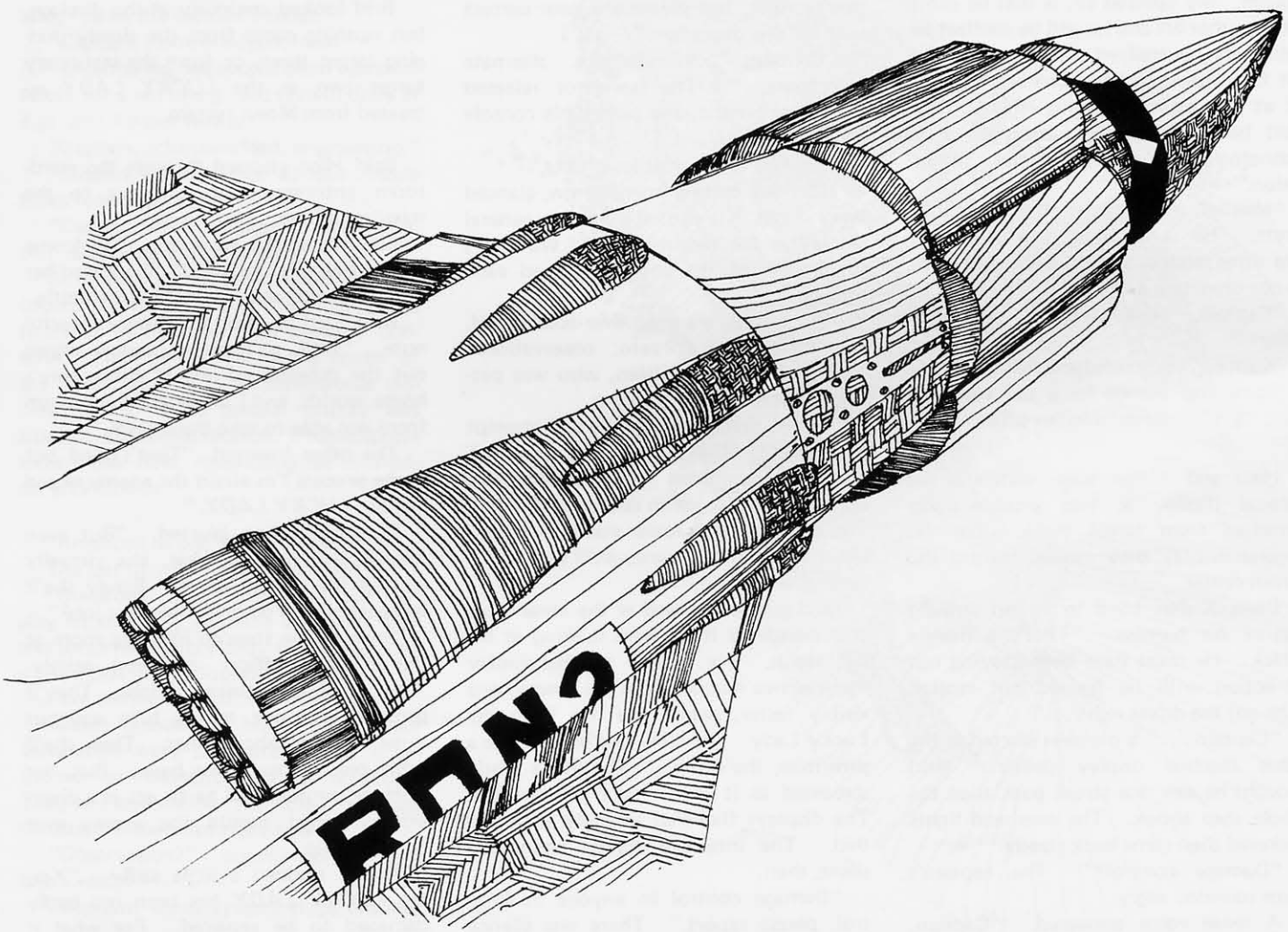
Brid Hlen was so surprised, he stuttered, "I-I-I thought you said you would only continue to pat her as long as she stayed lucky."

Daan laughed, then reached over and patted another bulkhead. "Indeed I did, but she stayed lucky."

"Huh! What about the damage and the decommissioning?" Brid asked.

"Yes. You'll have to explain, Mr. Kialen," the missile officer said dryly.

Kialen sat back in his seat. "You aren't looking at the right things. The war is nearly won. The decommissioning is essentially putting her out to pasture. Heck, a ship as decorated as this one will probably be made into a museum piece after the fighting is done. So you see, the damage doesn't really matter. Look at history. Most heavily decorated ships eventually go out in a blaza of glory. She fought her last battle to a draw and came back with most of her crew." He fondly petted the nearby bulkhead again. "Especially because of that last, I very appreciably pronounce her a lucky ship!"



GONDOR and SAURON

a review
by
David James Ritchie

It is unfortunate that SPI has chosen to issue **GONDOR** and **SAURON** as part of their **GAMES OF MIDDLE EARTH** package. Since **WAR OF THE RING,** the other component in the package, is such a good product, it can and will stand alone. However, the two folios do not really stand alone and of necessity must draw upon **WOTR** for much of their appeal. Such need not have been the case since there is nothing inherently wrong with the choice of topics for the **MIDDLE EARTH** folios. **GONDOR** deals with the siege of Gondor as set forth in J.R.R. Tolkien's **LOTR** trilogy, and **SAURON** deals with the defeat of Sauron by Elendil and Gil-galad on the Plain of Dagorlad at the end of the Second Age. The problem with these games is one of execution and the resultant mess can only detract from **WOTR.**

Both **GONDOR** and **SAURON** are organized in the usual SPI folio style with 17x22 mapsheet, 4-page Standard Rules shared by both games, a set of Exclusive Rules for each game, a sheet of playing aids and 200 **GONDOR** counters and 100 **SAURON** counters. Both are two-player simulations employing a fairly standard sequential move-combat type of turn organization (with the exception that each player's Movement Phase is preceeded by a Magic Leader Movement Phase during which leaders with a spell-casting capacity may either move or expend Magic Capability Points). In addition, **GONDOR** included a Forces of Sauron Siege Phase during which siege engines may be employed. At the end of each turn both players may attempt to rally disrupted combat units which are adjacent to friendly leaders.

Units move realistically thru contiguous hexes, expending Movement Points to enter various types of terrain. Don't worry, though, about memorizing large numbers of differing MP costs. There simply ain't that much terrain on the folio maps. Most of the terrain in **GONDOR** is taken up with the walls of the city of Minas Tirith. Outside of those city walls, there's a couple of roads, five hills, a few patches of trees and a few plowed fields. The most impressive terrain feature on the map is the mountain spur which is part of the city. As for the **SAURON** mapsheet, it makes **GONDOR'S** map seem busy by comparison. At one end is a row of mountain hexes simulating the ramparts of Mordor with some sort of gate struck in the middle. Below these walls is a slope running the breadth of the map. Add another 5 hills, a few lousy craters and a blob of brown which the Terrain Key informs us is Rough Terrain and there you have the Plain of Dagorlad. To term the mapsheet graphics for these games uninspired is a kindness. By the way, that Rough Terrain is not listed in the **TEC** nor anywhere in the rules that I can see. I am unaware of anyone who knows just what effect it is supposed to have on combat or movement and until SPI issues some errata, I can only assume that the designers don't know either.

Combat is of three types: Missile, Melee and Individual Combat. The combat value of units is given in letters (A thru E) with a cap indicating a Melee capacity and the lower case being used to indicate Missile Fire capacity. Each counter also contains a numerical Armour Protection Rating which may be modified by terrain as well as by such factors as whether or not the unit is carrying a cauldron of boiling oil. By indexing Attack Strength with AP Rating a number is found, which, when rolled upon a pair of dice, results in a casualty to the defending unit. The extent of the damage to the unit is determined by indexing the result of another die roll with the alphabetical Morale Rating of the defending unit (W thru Z). Results may include elimination, ½ elimination, or retreat of the unit a varying number of hexes.

Needless to say, this simple, yet effective, system (or some variation of it) has been an integral part of ancient-medieval miniatures wargaming just about since the egg was laid. It's a good system and it works in both **GONDOR** and **SAURON**. The only problem is that it gives me the feeling that I'm playing a medieval wargame, not a fantasy game. This is not the fault of the movement or combat systems, but of the manner in which the magical-individual elements of the games' topics have been tacked onto the system like a fantasy supplement.

Having arrived at last at the heart of the matter, it might be best to first point out that most of the elements of the books from which the games draw their rationale are present. Gandalf and Aragorn and Gothmog and Theoden are all present in **GONDOR.** The magical characters all have their own special spells. There are severed heads to cast over the walls of Minas Tirith and there is an A-I beastie called the Beast of Mordor in **SAURON** which the Dark Lord can conjure up in a pinch (and BOM wasn't even in any of Tolkien's writings). In short, there's lots of fantasy elements in the two games. The problem is they don't really mesh into a coherent whole. Instead, the games give the impression that the designers created a nice, smooth movement-combat system, and then sat down to the work of sticking a special morale effect in here, a super spell in there and a magic sword in the vitals of the game. Thus, instead of making some provision for a test of wills between Gandalf and the chief nazgul, the characters may either engage in Individual Combat (presumably with mace and sword) or Gandalf can cast a "Stalemate Nazgul" spell and cause the nazgul to retire. There is very little character interaction in the game. Characters are portrayed strictly as military leaders with a certain ability to lead the sheep to slaughter, aid them in keeping their morale up and once in a while, knock off another Leader. The ability of a minor character to have a major effect on military events by an essentially unmilitary act is not present. As a result of the designers' concentration on military events as portrayed in conventional terms, the games lose a certain richness of imagination, a feeling of conflict not only on this plane, but on other planes of existence.

All of the foregoing is not to say that both **GONDOR** and **SAURON** are bad games. They are adequate, but nothing more. Yet, this very lack of excellence is a cheat. Those who buy these games will probably do so because of their familiarity with the Tolkien mythos. They will expect the same impact from these games as was present in the books. They will not find the same degree of experience (let alone the same type of experience, which is not possible in two different mediums). They might just as well have purchased **VIKING** and used that system as the basis of their own scenario. That is a sad commentary.

What is even sadder is the fact that it need not have happened. SPI lavished a good deal of design talent on their Tolkien projects, but whereas the designers of **WOTR** knew from the beginning that they were designing a simulation of a piece of literature and acted accordingly, the team which developed **GONDOR** and **SAURON** lost track of this basic premise somewhere along the line and set out to simulate a military event. Given the really rotten scenario work on both games (but especially on **SAURON**), it looks like the designers were probably still trying to figure out what went wrong when they were supposed to be polishing the project for the typesetter. At any rate, the signs of a last minute rush are all there. Too bad.

GONDOR and **SAURON** are available at $5 each from SPI, 44 East 23rd Street, New York, NY 10010.

LETTERS

I consider **GEV/OGRE** the best idea you have had in ages, and would like to make a suggestion about it. It seems to me that such a game has excellent possibilities as a three/multi-player game. The basic format would be this: each player would have a deck of shuffled mission cards, which would detail his specific mission, the force level available to him, and the VP value of his mission. At the beginning of the game, each player would draw a mission card, inspect it, and then decide to accept the mission or decline it (placing the card in an envelope secretly, or noting his decision on scratch paper, or some similar means). If he declines the mission, then his objective becomes (using the forces given to him on the mission card) to prevent the other players from completing their missions. For each player's mission the declining player frustrates, the declining player is awarded the VP for that mission. If ALL the players decline, then victory is settled by some casualty counting method. In all cases, the players have dummies as well as effective pieces, and no piece is revealed until it engages in combat. Of course, if the player accepts his mission, then he must carry it out, although this does not prevent him from frustrating other player's missions as well, but in this case, no VP are given for frustrated missions. It seems to me that with the right balancing factors, you would have a multi-player game that would be filled with bluff, counter-bluff, and exciting action. (The question of whether to allow alliances and diplomacy, e.g. partial revelation of missions between players in exchange for help, etc., is a design point that you will have to consider).

The map-board for **GEV**, given these considerations, should probably be no larger than a standard SPI tactical map, in terms of the number of hexes, and should contain perhaps more terrain differentiation that the **OGRE** map (especially as relation to the different movement characteristics of men, vehicles, hovercraft, and Ogres). Probably about twice the number of counters as the present **OGRE** would be required (backprinted perhaps?) with three or four distinctive shadings.

I envisage each player's card pile from which he draws missions to be of 30 to 45 cards, containing a mixture of missions based on three force levels: weak, standard, and strong, differentiated by percentiles of about 30. Naturally, a mission completed with a weak force would be worth more VP than the same mission completed with a strong force. A non-exhaustive list of possible missions includes:

1) exit the board (with specified forces-several levels possible)
2) exit the board and hold a 'supply' corridor to the exit point
3) take one geographic objective
4) take two (or more) geographic objectives
5) preserve a specific force level at the end of the game
6) destroy all the units belonging to Player A
7) destroy all the units belonging to Player B (C etc.)
8) destroy all the units of all enemy players
9) identify all real enemy units on board, and have at least one unit capable of exiting the board to pass the information along
10) An ESPIONOGRE has been nuked into immobility at location X. It has dug itself in and camouflaged itself against enemy players. You must get to location X with an OGRECOVERY vehicle (has all OGRE characteristics except primary, secondary, and missile armament, and repairs the immobilized OGRE into full mobility by spending 3 GT unmoving in an adjacent hex), and recover the ESPION–OGRE off your end of the board.
11) Escort a soil sample machine to one or more specified locations to obtain tactical data, then recover it safely
12) Shield combat engineers building a specific emplacement (this could vary in type and time needed) at a specific location on the board. Completing the installation gives VP
13) Raid the HQ unit of a specific player
14) Allow an OGRE to draw fire from one of each type of unit the enemy player (specified) deploys, then withdraw the OGRE off the board to allow damage analysis.
15) Carry a special weapon (nerve or psychogenic gas, bacterial weapon, etc.) to a specified place for release against a specified enemy.

Actually, that mission list with three different force levels gives 45 mission variants right there.

In addition, it might be neat to give slightly different combat capabilities to each player (eg. one player might have FENCER OGRES, another only MK V's, and so on). This differentiation would extend to the other units as well.

Well, that's my idea. With a little development it might make a fun 3/multi-player game. Far too many multiplayer games (e.g. **DIPLOMACY**) are really not optimized for 3 players, while far too many 3-player games (**BATTLE FOR GERMANY, INVASION: AMERICA**) involve two (weaker) players ganging up on one (stronger) one, and that is not always a good thing. This idea for multi-player **OGRE** seems to me to avoid both difficulties. It's yours to do with as you wish.

John Howard Oxley
Halifax, Nova Scotia

I feel impelled to answer the letter published in TSG No. 15, in which Tom Jensen complained about the "unfinished" state of my games, **WHITE BEAR & RED MOON** and **NOMAD GODS.** It is unfortunate that he is so resentful about the matter, and that he looks upon a gift bonus as a "shoddy maneuver."

Simply put, the complaints which he makes are unfounded and misguided. It is true that there are some unexplained terrain features on the mapboards of both games. These are important as reference points, but have no function in play. However, Switzerland often appears on mapboards of WWII games, but usually remains out of play. Does Mr. Jensen, I wonder, feel abused by all of these games as well?

And yes, there are counters which are unexplained in **NOMAD GODS.** The game is a veritable confetti of odd units and several of them are not explained in the rules book. Yet all of them have and use the same factors which all units use in the game's normal play. Exotic abilities for some will have to be ignored, but there is nothing to prevent a player from just tossing most of them into the Spirit Bowl for random alliances. I am shocked to think that Mr. Jensen would have preferred to have blank counters. If I had had room in the rule book, without ruining the colored pages layout,

there would have been further instruction on the units, but it simply did not fit.

Each game is designed to stand alone and complete unto itself. Their mutual co-existance in time and place offers imaginative players the opportunity to use both games, or parts of either, together. Later, as time and opportunity present themselves, CHAOSIUM will present a complete supplement to cover the joining of all three games in the series, but until that time imagination and WYRMS FOOTNOTES will have to do.

Along this same vein, I wonder how many people think the changes that we have put **WB&RM** though in its successive editions have been a "shoddy maneuver?" We feel strongly about presenting the best available to our customers, and the substantial changes of the 2nd and upcoming 3rd Editions are efforts to learn the craft of game making and preserve the position of **WB&RM** as the best fantasy game on the market.

Finally, Mr. Jensen commits as error in presumption when he calls the CHAOSIUM an "organization." We are a semi-corporate anarchy with the incredible luck and skill to fumble our games and books onto the market. CHAOSIUM is a valid reference to our state of existance. It is also basically a one-man company, with the usual necessary support of good friends and part timers. I began this as a hobby, and I am determined that I will maintain it as a hobby despite the pressures of the industry and misunderstandings of a few individuals, and it is outside of my personal morality to rip anyone off.

Greg Stafford
The Chaosium

This is, I'm afraid, a sour grapes letter. It does not involve Metagaming directly but as a rising star in the gaming field it must be of interest to you at least.

Some years ago I answered an ad in SPI's **Strategy & Tactics** describing a fantasy role playing game called **THE LORDS OF VALETIA** produced by Ans Varkus. I never heard a word from Ans Varkus or ever saw anything from my $19.50. About a year later, I did receive a letter from Design Operations Inc. stating that they had acquired **L.O.V.** and would be sending me my rules package soon. I never heard any more from them and there had been no return address on envelope or letter head.

My next contact with **THE LORDS OF VALETIA** came as a result of the review in **The Space Gamer** by Brian Esterson. I quickly sent a letter to the address given requesting information of the game and an explanation concerning my being forgotten. I have just received my answer and it seems that **THE LORDS OF VALETIA** has been sold again! This time to Gamesmasters Publishing association in Nashua, New Hampshire. I have written Gamesmasters but no longer hold out even the slightest hope of seeing anything for my money.

My point in writing you is that as I'm sure you would be the first to admit that the small but growing population of "new wave" gamers is on the whole, a patient and trusting lot. I myself waited over a year since the initial payment for Brett Tondreau's **GALAXY II** and have been vastly rewarded for my patience. But then Brett is honest and intellegent, as well as responsible.

I'm sure I'm not the only sucker caught up in **THE LORDS OF VALETIA** Round Robin Ripoff, and I wonder what kind of initial subscription response a small new game magazine called **The Space Gamer** would get today.

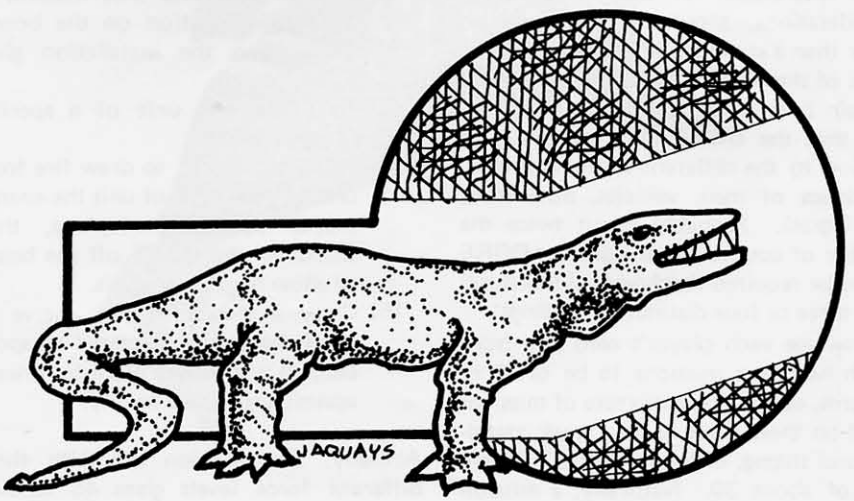
This is what bothers me. Any new and bright group of people trying to get started in the gaming business today will find the road even harder than before because of sitautions like **THE LORDS OF VALETIA**.

Perhaps Brian Esterson's experience with **THE LORDS OF VALETIA** has been (obviously) different than my own but I think it is the responsibility of **The Space Gamer** and other magazine like it to check out reviews and reviewers before publishing them.

We gamers depend upon **The Space Gamer's** credibility in not only buying Metagaming's line of products but those of other publisher's products mentioned in its pages.

Don't lose that honesty and trust. All of us in the buying public will have lost a great deal. And so will you.

Duke Whedbee
Ahoskie, N.C.



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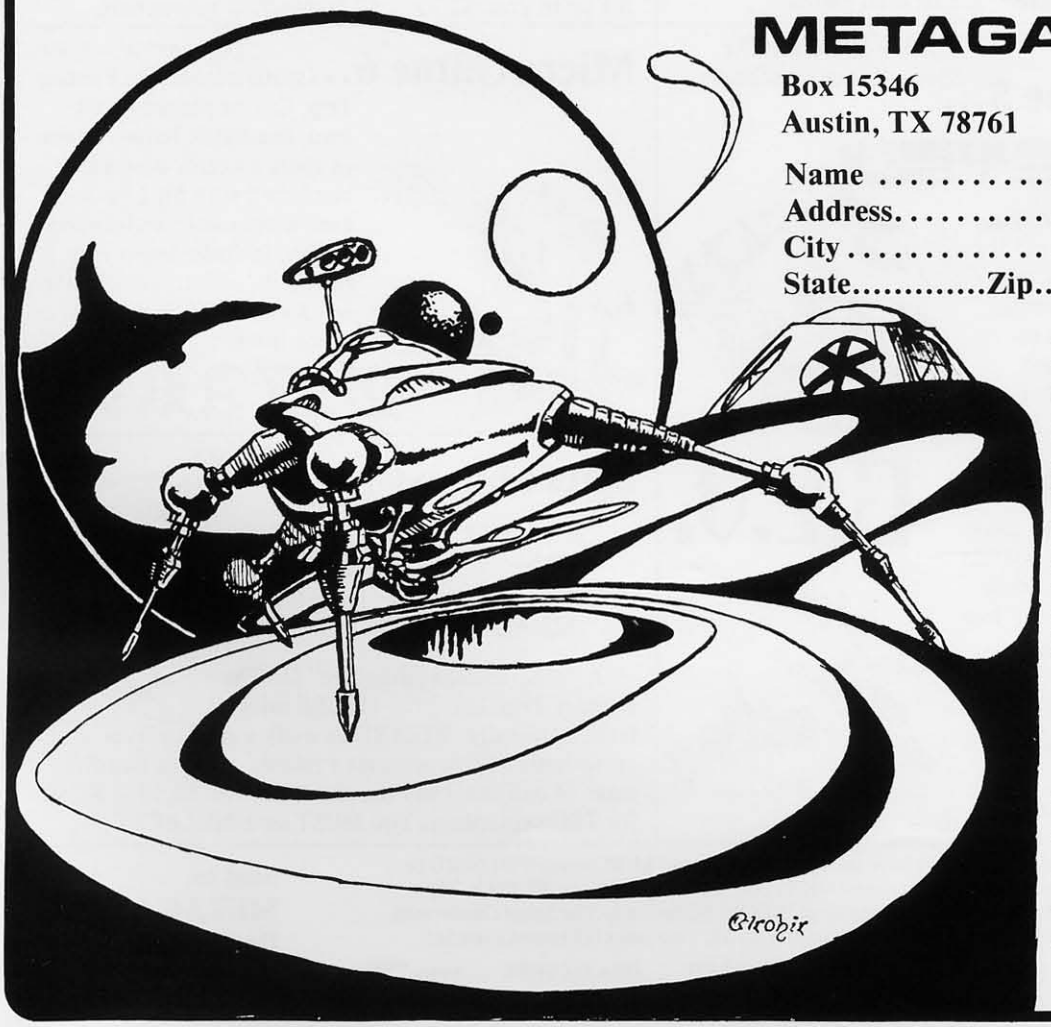

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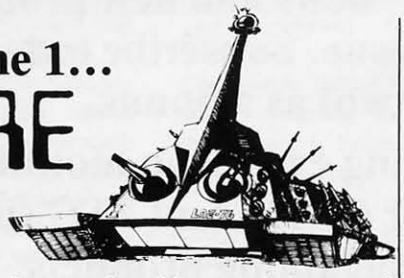

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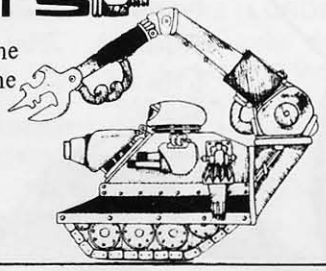

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